NARRATIVE AND HISTORY
IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL WEST

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ed. by

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CONTENTS

The idea for a book which explores the connections between narrative and history across the early medieval period came about as we, a literary scholar and a historian, collaborated as editors of the Brepols book series 'Studies in the Early Middle Ages' (together with the archaeologist Julian Richards). Increasingly literary scholars and historians have been drawn to read each others' texts and been influenced by each others' methodologies, and we hoped, in organizing this volume, to create a context for scholars working within these two disciplines to meet and work together. The papers gathered in this volume were all given in 1999 — at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds, and finally during a day conference in November held at York. Each occasion was marked by active exchange between speakers and also our audiences, all of whom were generous with ideas and encouragement. The participants at these occasions also challenged each other to think more clearly and learn from a chronologically and geographically wide range of comparative material. Our thanks are due to Simon Forde at Brepols and to the contributors and all those who participated in the sessions at Kalamazoo, Leeds, and in the conference at York. We are especially grateful to Julia Barrow for commenting on the Introduction. Finally, we hope the essays in this volume reflect the engaging conference exchanges and suggest as well new possibilities for further interdisciplinary work.

Elizabeth M. Tyler
Ross Balzaretti

BAR	British Archaeological Reports
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHD	*English Historical Documents*, vol. I: *c 500–1042*, ed. and trans. by Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd edn (London, 1979).
EHR	*English Historical Review*
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
PG	*Patrologia cursus completus. Series graeca*, ed. by J.-P. Migne, 162 vols (Paris, 1857–87).
PL	*Patrologia cursus completus. Series latina*, ed. by J.-P. Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844–64).
S	P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography*, Royal Historical Society Guides and Handbooks, 8 (London, 1968).
SC	Sources chrétiennes

Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti

This collection, *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, deliberately brings together work which is chronologically, geographically, and generically diverse. In exploring the nature and function of narrative in texts which modern scholars use to study the Middle Ages, each essay participates in what is currently a lively area of research, especially for intellectual history. The contributors to this volume, both historians and literary scholars, seek to extend the boundaries of this current research. In combining social, political, and literary, as well as intellectual, history, they make the case that looking at narrative in a wide range of the forms which have come down to us from the Middle Ages provides new vantage points from which to view the period. The contributors to this volume draw on different scholarly traditions, fields, and training and yet they speak to each other. This introduction aims to map the intellectual framework within which the essays are situated — a framework which, importantly, makes that speaking, that interchange possible. To begin this mapping, rather than providing an overview of each essay, we will consider the key terms of this volume's title: 'narrative', 'history' and 'early medieval West'.

Narrative

Although the essays here testify to the variety of ways in which 'narrative' can be interpreted, underlying them all is an understanding of 'narrative' as the principle means by which coherence or order is given to events in the act of shaping an account of them. Thus each contributor is working within a space opened up most notably by the historian Hayden White. Since the 1980s White's insistence on the content of the form — that is, that form, far from being ideologically

neutral, participates in the meaning of a text — has transformed the way historians read their sources and how they write their own accounts of the past. White's work is part of a larger 'linguistic turn' in historical scholarship, which, in maintaining that texts do not provide direct access to events of the past but rather mediate those events through language, has transformed the relationship between historical and literary studies. For early medievalists, White's focus on form complemented important scholarship on the historians of the early and high Middle Ages, especially that of Nancy Partner and Richard Southern; and White also directly influenced work on historiography such as Walter Goffart's study of Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon.[1] The work of these scholars has been instrumental in showing how attention to the ways early medieval historians crafted their accounts of the past are as much a part of their stories as what they say, and thus reveal much about the past itself. Southern, Partner, Goffart, and many others have taught us to be attentive to the meaning of the form when we read sustained narrative accounts of the past, a group of texts we might gather together under the rubric 'historiography'.

The post-Romantic formation of White's notion of narrative is perhaps most evident for the early medievalist in his dismissal of annals and chronicles as lacking narrativity because they lack closure, which is not just an ending, but a sense of a destination which governs the shape of the entire narrative. Yet, as almost every essay in this volume explores, this expectation that narrativity be contained within the boundaries of a text — that the story a text tells will be evident in the words on the page — is at odds with the reality of early medieval textuality. Writers from this period were able to link events which appear to us not to be connected in order to tell their stories about past events which do not necessarily 'make sense' to us as history. While the texts they set down may seem to us to lack narrative closure and meaning, this may well be because we ourselves have an imperfect understanding of the social context within which the texts were produced and meant to function. From this perspective, it is argued here, medieval texts, the products of a world in which orality remained primary, are completed by a web of social and textual relations which call into question modern expectations that coherence relies on a single author's vision, or that closure must be woven into the text rather than, for example, supplied by a shared understanding of the progress of time within salvation history, or by the social ritual in which a text played a part, or by the place of a poem within poetic tradition.

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[1] Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 17–18.

This volume aims to use attention to narrative as a tool to open up texts which record events but which in a range of ways challenge modern notions of what constitutes history-writing: these include documents such as charters and records of dispute settlements, saints' lives, miracle collections, chronicles, and poetry. Hence, we have arranged the chapters to highlight the importance of form over more conventional organizing principles, such as time and place. In juxtaposing these types of texts with each other, and bringing their study alongside that of historiography, whose forms have benefited from scholarly attention, the essays in this volume simultaneously contribute to a fuller and less anachronistic conceptualization of the nature of narrative in the early Middle Ages and to the continuing development in how we use texts to understand the past.

History

Our term 'history' is an exceptionally polyvalent term simultaneously encompassing the past itself, in the sense of what actually happened, sustained writing about the past (including both accounts from the past and the accounts we produce ourselves about the past), and the discipline of history as practised by scholars in the modern academy. Away from the Anglophone world, in both Romance and Germanic languages, words such as *histoire* and *Geschichte* extend as well to incorporate what would in English be denoted as 'story'. While we can distinguish these different categories of 'history', the scope of the word forcefully reminds us that these conceptual distinctions constantly threaten to break down. Thus the word 'history' itself makes it impossible to evade the complex and diverse relationship between events and their linguistic mediation and the ways that scholars study events and their representation. In making narrative their subject, all the essays in this volume thus make the linguistic mediation of history their subject. In many different ways, their explorations of the nature of that mediation acknowledge or are informed by, but then step away from, the philosophical position, characteristic of post-structuralism, that only discourses about the past are knowable to us and that the past itself remains fundamentally unknowable. These explorations of narrative — of mediation — are as varied as the intellectual formations of the historians and literary scholars who have written them, but strikingly each uses an awareness of narrative to step out of the textuality of history, that is, to gain perspective on the texts which allows them to consider the real people in real circumstances who produced them and thus to gain insight into the past, rather than being subsumed by the perspectives offered by the texts. Essentially these essays are all very practical — in the sense of being

rooted in the practice of reading texts (in order to use them to better know the early Middle Ages) rather than engaged with the philosophy of history. However, each essay is made more rigorous — more disciplined in its study of the past — by its author's conscious negotiation of the linguistically mediated nature of our access to the past.

In this present context, consideration of the Latin term *historia* illustrates clearly the important point that the polyvalence considered above is far from being distinctive of modern notions of history. The complexity of the term *historia*, which is no straightforward equivalent of its descendent 'history', is evident in the efforts of classical and medieval writers to make clear how they were using the term by offering successive definitions, redefinitions, and reformulations. Of central importance, *historia* denotes both events and accounts of events. Thus for the Middle Ages too *historia* holds together both events and their linguistic mediation. Isidore influentially conveyed classical understandings of *historia* to the Middle Ages when he wrote: 'Historia est narratio rei gestae, per quam ea, quae in praeterito facta sunt, dinoscuntur.'[2] That Isidore understands narration as a heuristic tool which can be used to discern what happened in the past rather than as a direct representation of the past reminds us that medieval theorizing about history did not rest naively on an assumption of a correspondence between representation and reality. Moving away from definitions, usage also underscores the generic openness of the term *historia.* The extensive and shifting semantic field of this term demands that we think broadly when we examine narrative and history in the early Middle Ages. This volume, with its wide range of texts, tries to respond to this demand.

The variety of texts which could be labelled as *historia* was in part a consequence of there being no formal discipline of history in the medieval period. Especially prior to the twelfth century, educational practices encouraged historiography to be seen as a branch of both poetry and rhetoric, and thus texts we might classify as historiography, while well-known and well-read, were not studied as 'history'. Moreover, it is quite clear that many early medieval authors were able to write confidently about the past in a range of forms. There is no shortage of famous examples — Gregory of Tours, Gregory the Great, Bede, Paul the Deacon, Einhard. These people wrote formal histories, but they also wrote hagiography, poetry, moral treatises, homilies, letters, and so on. Many of

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[2] *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum Originum Libri XX*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford, 1911), II, 41. 'History is the narration of things done, through which those things, that happened in the past, are discerned.'

the essays in this volume remind us that writers of history were also writers of documents, that hagiographers grappled with the same issues of credibility and authority which taxed historians, and that poets competed with chroniclers and historians. Thus in bringing the study of poetry, documents, hagiography, and chronicles alongside historiography, the essays in this collection attempt to respect medieval, rather than modern, taxonomies. Attending to the relationship of narrative and history within this broad range of texts allows us to learn more about these texts and the situations and people which produced them.

Early Medieval West

The use of the term the 'early medieval West' in the title may seem to claim that this book addresses the topic of narrative and history throughout Western Europe in the period from *c.* 500–1100. In using this term we indicate that we have sought to bring together work from a wide chronological and geographical spread in the recognition that one of the distinctive features of the intellectual formation of medievalists is that, while we have particular areas of expertise, we are accustomed to listen to each other across national boundaries and across wide chronological spans. This breadth has been a source of intellectual strength for the study of the Middle Ages; and this is a strength which we have wanted to bring to bear on how we read medieval texts. Hence the essays gathered here move from Italy and Francia to Scandinavia and England, and examine texts produced from the seventh to the early twelfth century. Each of the essays presented here started life as a paper at a conference, and the discussions had in York, Kalamazoo, and Leeds and the subsequent circulation of drafts of the papers allowed contributors to learn from each other's work as they addressed questions raised by texts produced in specific times and places.

Literature and Literary

Explanation of the absence of the words 'literature' or 'literary' from this volume's title can also help define its aims and delineate the contours. Although 'literature' and 'literary' are easier to define than 'history', these terms are only anachronistically used to describe aspects of textual production in the early Middle Ages. It is not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that 'literature' and 'literary' come to be used for a set of texts whose hallmarks include conformity to agreed upon criteria for aesthetic excellence, a fictional dimension,

intentional complexity or ambiguity of meaning, and a place within a canon which forms part of an educational curriculum which distinguishes between high and popular culture. All of these features of 'literature' sit uneasily with the kinds of texts studied in this collection of essays; of particular relevance here are the issues of textual ambiguity and fictionality. Many of the texts considered here, while they now require careful analysis and interpretation to unwrap their meaning, particularly because we encounter them outside of their original social context, nevertheless used narrative specifically to limit ambiguity. The producers of competing hagiographic narratives, charters, chronicles, and historical poetry all sought to ensure that their version of events dominated: they meant their texts to be understood and to have an impact in both the present and the future. Post-Romantic notions of aesthetic excellence and high culture have little to offer the scholar aiming to uncover the sociability of early medieval texts.

In leaving literature out of the title, we also signal that the texts examined here issued from milieux which did not recognize our category of 'fiction'. Among the producers of our texts, only William of Malmesbury worked within an intellectual environment which was beginning to develop the concept we denote as 'fiction'. The absence of a concept of fiction should not however be taken as an indication of a lack of sophistication or a tendency to credulousness on the part of the producers and audiences of early medieval texts; rather our distinction between 'fact' and 'fiction' could be said to reveal the narrowness of modern notions of factual discourse, which this collection seeks to bypass in its juxtaposition of hagiography, charters, chronicles, and poetry with historiography. Consequently, the bringing together of work on these different kinds of texts foregrounds the importance of stepping away from the habit, still common amongst historians, of trying to determine which parts of a narrative are 'true' and which 'false'.

Although we have not used the term 'literature', the techniques which have been developed for reading the texts seen as literary can be usefully applied to reading other kinds of texts. Literary study has attended productively to the relationship between what is said and how it is said — between content and form. The practice of close reading, honed in the twentieth century by literary schools as distinct as New Criticism and Deconstruction, provides a set of sharp tools with which to examine non-literary discourse, as long as this move does not entail an assumption that a charter or saint's life, for instance, necessarily embodies the kind of ambiguity or indeterminateness we have come to prize when reading literature. The techniques of close reading also tend to be deployed to illustrate textual unity and coherence: qualities which have proved not to be

characteristic — at least in their modern forms — of early medieval texts. The essays in this collection have sought to close read, without using this practice to impose modern values on medieval texts. In so doing, they have attempted to respect the nature of medieval textuality while using modern literary methods of reading. Such attempts can in turn sharpen our awareness of how culturally determined our own ways of reading and aesthetic values are.

Literary study then has much to offer the historian as a set of skills — but conceived in this way, there is a danger of it becoming a handmaid, ancillary to the discipline of history. Interdisciplinarity entails a much fuller integration of literary and historical study. In this volume, in which no essay uses literary practice to look through form to the facts, but in which the form of the text itself becomes a way into understanding the past, literary and historical methodologies meet as equal partners. As is repeatedly explored here, to project modern notions of literature back onto the early Middle Ages closes off from literary study a whole range of texts which have much to reveal about the aesthetic values, imaginations, and story-telling, alongside the ideological commitments, of the people in the period 500–1100. We hope that each individual essay, as much as the collection as a whole, is characterized by a truly interdisciplinary integration of literary and historical study, in part fostered by the experience of hearing and reading each other's papers. Furthermore, we hope that joining the essays together in a single volume has made explicit the links between literary and historical analysis and the potential for exciting new modes of analysis. Above all it seems to us that these essays raise the possibility that form itself is something that scholars should study in an interdisciplinary way, learning from each other.

Convention

As the contributors to this volume brought together the study of history and the study of literature to explore early medieval narratives, convention came to the fore time and again. In essays which consider apparently disparate topics contributors have grappled with the meaning and function of conventions. Focusing on convention has emerged as a much more productive way to approach texts from the early Middle Ages than, for instance, considering which parts of a text might be factual or trying to uncover the ways in which a text might be described as unified. Of course, scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were deeply engaged with convention as they sought to establish the rules of diplomatic, to identify the topoi of hagiography, or reveal the formulaic nature of vernacular Germanic verse. Each essay collected here rests on this foundational

work which began in the seventeenth century. But in looking at these papers in the round, it is striking that each contributor has moved forward with this work to ask questions about the social meaning of these conventions.

Much of the social approach of these essays to conventionality has its roots in interdisciplinarity. For example, as emerges here when studies of poetry are set alongside studies of charters and dispute settlements, the formulaic nature of documents can suggest ways of approaching the use of formulas within poetic tradition, and vice versa. The recognition that conventions shaped many different kinds of narrative encouraged us to ask wider questions. Along with other scholars working from the final decades of the twentieth century onwards, rather than making the identification of convention our goal, as has often been the case in literary study, or viewing conventionality as an impediment to seeing what actually happened in the past, as has often been the case in historical study, we have sought explicitly and implicitly to explore the social dimensions of narrative conventions. Pursuing the meaning and function of convention has underlined the socially active nature of conventions; that is, that conventions were maintained, not by abstract diplomatic, poetic, or hagiographic traditions, but by people who found the conventions useful in shaping lived experience. That shaping involves the production of the written accounts we now study, but the impulse to use convention was not primarily about creating a text but about influencing real people's perceptions of events and their actions. As the codified behaviour of ritual and ceremony reminds us, convention is not merely textual, it is fundamentally social. Viewed from this perspective, we see not people unthinkingly reiterating formulas, stock characters and plots, or hagiographical topoi. Rather when narratives are considered contextually, they demonstrate that their producers had a sophisticated grasp of the meaning of convention, which we can only begin to recover by drawing on the skills of both historians and literary scholars.

Conclusion

Each of the essays in this volume brings the study of form and the study of people together. In so doing, each of the contributors uses his or her imagination, judiciously, to people the space around the forms used in the texts they study. In so doing, they treat form not as a literary abstraction, but as something created and maintained by people. Approached from this perspective, the relationship of form and power emerged strongly in areas as diverse as Anglo-Saxon charters, Italian hagiography, and Old Norse poetry. Crucially, when the power of form is placed in the foreground, the producers of early medieval texts present

themselves as aware that form had meaning and as capable of using the ideology of their forms in conscious and sophisticated ways to take control of their environments. The power of medieval narrative forms extends into the present day too as it shapes our own views of the past. Narrative form thus stands as an important source for knowledge about the past — but one which can be accessed only through collaborative work which demands that historians and literary scholars not only learn from each other but that they think together.

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Brian Stock, *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore, 1990). See especially the essay 'Literary Discourse and the Social Historian', pp. 75–94.

Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987).

Writing Medieval History, ed. by Nancy Partner (London, 2005). See especially the essays by Sarah Foot, Monika Otter, and Robert M. Stein in the section entitled 'Literary Techniques for Reading Historical Texts'.

Spoken Narratives in Ninth-Century Milanese Court Records

Ross Balzaretti

The accounts of judicial proceedings known as *placita* or *notitiae* constitute an important type of evidence for the ways in which narrative was used in the early medieval period.[1] *Notitiae*, as records of actual meetings of courts, necessarily dealt with past, present, and future within the same text, because a written record and its associated witnesses was meant to provide unassailable 'protection' for the property in dispute, often for all time. It seems likely also that *notitiae* helped to preserve memory of past events quite as much as self-conscious history writing did.[2] However, a complex definition of narrative is not needed for the analysis of documents of this sort because they tended to employ fairly simple forms of narrative. Therefore, when referring to narrative in this essay I shall be using one of the simplest definitions of narrative, 'an account of

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[1] For convenient definitions of *placitum* and *notitia*, see *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by W. Davies and P. Fouracre (Cambridge, 1986), p. 273, and *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by W. Davies and P. Fouracre (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 280–81. These books are the best available sustained discussions of early medieval dispute settlement and the documents which record it.

[2] Key studies within a huge field: J. Le Goff, *History and Memory* (Italian original 1977; English trans., New York, 1992); M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993); P. J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994); E. van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Basingstoke, 1999); J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992); E. Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge, 1991); *Narrative and Genre*, ed. by M. Chamberlain and P. Thompson (London, 1998).

a *connected* sequence of human happenings'.[3] Embedded within this definition is the close connection of narrative with both 'story' and 'history', as narrative (or story/history) is *told* by a narrator (or story-teller/historian).[4] Normally, such narrative is in the past tense because a story cannot be told before it has happened, only afterwards. Also implied by the definition is the 'completeness' which such narrative gives to events: a narrative account found within a charter or *notitia* will 'make sense' of apparently unconnected events just as a contemporary historian or poet would, often with the similar purpose of invalidating rival accounts.

However, it is all too easy to forget that narratives, in their sense as stories which relate the past with a view to making sense of it, do not have to exist simply on the written page. Indeed, there is a good case to be made that another essential feature of narrative is that it is spoken, by the narrator but also by the participants in the account, or is a written representation of something once spoken. This raises a problem for historians who habitually deal with written evidence and think in ways conditioned by their experience of living in societies dominated by writing.[5] One solution employed by contemporary historians has been oral history, a well-established form of research but only applicable to still living subjects.[6] Of course, there are important scholarly investigations of the

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[3] *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. by G. Roberts (London, 2001), p. 16 (my italics). A range of other definitions can be found in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1981), and P. Cobley, *Narrative* (London, 2001), pp. 1–28.

[4] Geoffrey Roberts points out that for some philosophers narrative and story can have different meanings (*History and Narrative Reader*, pp. 436–37: narrative meaning 'tales told about events' and story meaning 'the actuality of the events' — but others would not make this distinction). *The History and Narrative Reader* is a convenient summary of the many theoretical and methodological disputes which some historians have engaged in over the last forty years (especially pp. 1–21).

[5] Examined by C. J. Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), 3–24, and the essays in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. by T. Fenster and D. Lord Smail (Ithaca, NY, 2003).

[6] G. Prins, 'Oral History', in *New Perspectives on the Past*, ed. by P. Burke, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 120–56; van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, p. 3; Le Goff, *History and Memory*, pp. 131–32. Historians in particular might have taken more notice of the great novelist Marguerite Yourcenar when she wrote that 'It has not been sufficiently emphasised that although we possess an enormous mass of written documents, and also visual documents, from the past, nothing is left to us of *voices* before the first nasal-sounding phonograph records of the nineteenth century': *That Mighty Sculptor, Time* (English trans. by Walter Kaiser in collaboration with the author, London, 1992), p. 27, italics in original. This is an important

social importance of speech which have greater relevance to earlier societies. 'Oral tradition' — as studied above all by Vansina — is a concept which still seems to function best in those modern societies where writing has not come to predominate as it has in the West.[7] 'Orality' — which some historians have written about extensively with reference to early medieval Europe — has perhaps not yet become an accepted concept within the historian's lexicon in the way 'literacy' has long been.[8] Books about the cultural significance of writing and reading (usually dealing with 'literacy') have been much more common than those about speaking ('orality').[9] Nonetheless, although most authors are now agreed that written and oral were strongly interrelated rather than polarized,[10] contemporary academics — including those who study early medieval Europe — retain their

observation, as both ethnographic research in the field and oral history have been methodologically transformed by sound recording, albeit in a paradoxical way. Sound recording takes down the way someone says something, especially the tone, inflection, pausing, and so on, more accurately than any written report could ever do, but it inevitably alters, sometimes very substantially, what people actually tell their questioner (Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, p. 16).

[7] J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition* (Harmondsworth, 1961), and Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, 1985). For the early Middle Ages, see M. Richter, *The Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, 71 (Turnhout, 1994), and Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West: Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (Dublin, 1994).

[8] M. Banniard, *Viva Voce: Communication Orale et Communication Écrite en Occident Latin (IVe–IXe siècle)* (Paris, 1992), and Banniard, 'Language and Communication in Carolingian Europe', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. II: *c.700–c.900*, ed. by R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 695–708; M. Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), 3–36; Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance'; *New Approaches to Medieval Communication*, ed. by M. Mostert (Turnhout, 1999).

[9] R. McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 1–22 ('The Spoken and the Written Word'); *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990); B. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. D. O. Crônîn and D. Ganz (Cambridge, 1990); A. Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, trans. by C. M. Radding (Yale, 1995). N. Everett, 'Literacy and the Law in Lombard Government', *Early Medieval Europe*, 9 (2000), 93–127, is an important reconsideration of these issues for the whole of Lombard Italy, as is his book *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568–774* (Cambridge, 2003).

[10] See notes 8 and 9. Michael Richter, reacting against McKitterick's views, very much plays up the importance of oral over written communication even in the case of 'practical' texts such as charters: '*Quisquis sit scribere, nullum potat abere labore*: Zur Laienschiftlichkeit im 8. Jahrhundert', in *Karl Martell in siener Zeit*, ed. by J. Jarnut, U. Nonn, and M. Richter (Sigmaringen, 1994), pp. 393–404.

love of viewing the world through writing, even when fully aware of the pitfalls of this stance.[11]

In fact, it has always been possible for historians to research how people spoke in the early medieval past because very many texts of that period *report* speech. Histories and biographies can be fertile hunting grounds for past speech patterns.[12] Such 'reporting' is sometimes so immediate that it bursts through the bounds of genre. A good example of this occurs in Andrew of Bergamo's *Historia* (written *c.* 880). Andrew has been narrating, in his normal third person voice, the dispute between the Bishops of Brescia and Milan about where the dead Carolingian emperor Louis II should be buried, when suddenly he addresses his readers directly: 'Veritatem in Christo loquor. Ibi fui et partem aliquam portavi et cum portantibus ambulavi da flumen qui dictitur Oleo usque ad flumen Adua.'[13] In this instance Andrew's first-person words seem intended to establish the truth of the preceding third-person narrative. His invocation of Christ surely supports the seriousness of his intent in adding this personal detail. The fact that the site of Louis's burial was *disputed* by the Bishops of Brescia and Milan may have prompted Andrew to intervene in his narrative in his own voice, to make

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[11] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987).

[12] Typical examples: on King Guntram, Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X*, ed. by B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 1.1 (Hannover, 1951), VIII 1–13, pp. 370–79; on Coldingham abbey, Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. and trans. by B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), IV, 25, pp. 420–27; on the conversion of a Persian queen to Christianity, Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX (Hannover, 1878), IV, 50, p. 137; on the meeting between Queen Hildegard and Leoba, Rudolf of Fulda, *Vita Leobae*, ed. by G. Waitz, MGH Scriptores, 15 (Hannover, 1887), p. 130.

[13] Andrea Bergomatis, *Historia*, ed. by G. Waitz, MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX (Hannover, 1878), chapter 18, pp. 220–30 (p. 229), and now *Testi storici e poetici dell'Italia Carolingia*, ed. and Italian trans. by L. A. Berto (Padua, 2002), pp. 60–61 (with different chapter numbering). 'I speak the truth in Christ: for I was there and I took some part and I walked with the bearers from the River Oglio to the River Adda.' Louis was buried in the church of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan (*The Annals of Fulda*, ed. and trans. by T. Reuter (Manchester, 1992), *s.a.* 875, p. 77); P. Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001), p. 85 (accepting the veracity of Andrew's account). The best treatment of Andrew in English is G. V. B. West, 'Studies in Representations and Perceptions of the Carolingians in Italy 774–875' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1998), pp. 55–76. I am very grateful to Dr West for permission to cite his thesis and for discussion of parts of this essay.

sure that the 'right' version of the story was recorded. As we shall see, speech, story-telling, narrative, and truth-telling go very much hand in hand in early medieval texts, especially in records of judicial proceedings, including those examined here.

The history of court procedures, dispute settlement, and the ways in which these were documented is now a well-worn theme in the modern historiography of early medieval Europe.[14] Many scholars have observed how oral performance retained its importance in judicial proceedings despite the increasing use of written documents, mostly charters, as evidence in such cases.[15] As Michael Clanchy puts it: 'The assumption was that where possible a litigant must speak on his own behalf in court, because only words from his own mouth were authentic.'[16] Yet, there has been little explicit investigation of the considerable quantity of speech recorded in *placita*, *notitiae*, and similar records. If the main reason for the presence of speech in *placita* records was to authenticate them, it is surprising

[14] The literature is now large. Italy: C. J. Wickham, 'Land Disputes and their Social Framework in Lombard-Carolingian Italy, 700–900', in *Settlement of Disputes*, ed. by Davies and Fouracre, pp. 104–24, repr. with an additional note in his *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400–1200* (London, 1994), pp. 229–56, which is the version cited here; F. Bougard, *La Justice dans le royaume d'Italie: de la fin du VIIIe siècle au début du XIe siècle* (Rome, 1995), and Bougard, 'Public Power and Authority', in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by C. La Rocca (Oxford, 2002), pp. 34–58 (pp. 50–54); P. Skinner, 'Disputes and Disparity: Women in Court in Medieval Southern Italy', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 21 (1996), 85–105; P. Bonacini, 'Giustizia pubblica e società nell'Italia carolingia', *Quaderni Medievali*, 31 (1991), 6–35; F.-J. Arlinghaus, 'From "Improvised Theatre" to Scripted Roles: Literacy and Changes in Communication in North Italian Law Courts (Twelfth–Thirteenth Centuries)', in *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society*, ed. by K. Heidecker (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 215–38. For north of the Alps: W. Brown, *Unjust Seizure: Conflict, Interest and Authority in an Early Medieval Society* (Ithaca, NY, 2001); W. Brown, 'The Use of Norms in Disputes in Early Medieval Bavaria', *Viator*, 30 (1999), 15–40, and Brown, 'Charters as Weapons: On the Role Played by Early Medieval Dispute Records in the Disputes They Record', *Journal of Medieval History*, 28 (2002), 227–48; K. Heidecker, 'Communication by Written Texts in Court Cases: Some Charter Evidence (ca. 800–ca. 1100)', in *New Approaches*, ed. by Mostert, pp. 101–26; M. Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 129–39; J. Martindale, '"His Special Friend"? The Settlement of Disputes and Political Power in the Kingdom of the French, Tenth to Mid-Twelfth Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 5 (1995), 21–58, and especially the books cited in note 1 above.

[15] *Settlement of Disputes*, ed. by Davies and Fouracre, pp. 217–19.

[16] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 273 (a discussion of the spoken word in legal procedure).

that so little work has been done on *what* was actually said, by whom, and how it was represented in writing. Most historians have dismissed this aspect of the genre because they think the recorded speech is merely formulaic.[17] It cannot represent speech as really spoken because there are too many similarities in recorded speech patterns in documents from diverse geographical and cultural contexts. Certainly, it is correct that early medieval court records are very formal texts, tightly organized reports of what may well have been much less organized social occasions.[18] But even formulaic narratives can be very revealing of shared attitudes, perhaps especially so.[19] Further, why do some texts record speech *directly* and others not? What is to be made of *placita* which do not record what was actually said? The rest of this essay approaches these questions via the *placita* preserved in the archive of the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan.[20] The bulk of the Milanese cases record reported speech — both direct and indirect —

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[17] Wickham, *Land and Power*, pp. 231–32: '[we might] imagine that the dialogues in the text [the Controne case of 847] had actually been spoken by the participants, until we notice the recurrence of formal phrases all the way through. It is very rarely possible, in fact, to tell whether parties to cases actually spoke in formulae, or whether they said a whole variety of things, but were recorded by the scribe in formulae: a bit of both, in all probability.'

[18] Wickham, *Land and Power*, pp. 230–36, and R. Balzaretti, 'The Monastery of Sant'Ambrogio and Dispute Settlement in Early Medieval Milan', *Early Medieval Europe*, 3 (1994), 1–18 (p. 2), outline the main forms these records took in Italy. There is now English-language discussion of early medieval Italian charter forms by A. Bartoli Langeli, 'Private Charters', in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by La Rocca, pp. 205–20 (pp. 212–20), and especially N. Everett, 'Scribes and Charters in Lombard Italy', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 16 (2000), 39–83 (pp. 63–73 on formulae); also Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy*, pp. 197–234. For the nature of the law which was used in court, see C. M. Radding, *The Origins of Medieval Jurisprudence* (Yale, 1987), and S. Reynolds, 'Medieval Law', in *The Medieval World*, ed. by P. Linehan and J. L. Nelson (London, 2001), pp. 485–502 (pp. 486–89). Heidecker, 'Communication by Written Texts in Court Cases', p. 103, rightly emphasizes courts as performative occasions.

[19] White, *Content of the Form*, pp. 42–45.

[20] There are twenty-one *placita* preserved in the archive of the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan from the ninth and tenth centuries. The standard edition of these is Cesare Manaresi, *I Placiti del 'Regnum Italiae'*, 2 vols; vol. I (Rome, 1955) covers the period 776–945 [cited hereafter as Manaresi]; and vol. II (Rome, 1957) covering 962–1002. Discussed by A. Padoa Schioppa, 'Aspetti della giustizia Milanese nell'età carolingia', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 14 (1988), 9–25; Balzaretti, 'Monastery of Sant'Ambrogio'; H. Keller, 'Der Gerichtsort in Oberitalienischen und Toskanischen Städten: Untersuchungen zur Stellung der Stadt im Herrschaftssystem des Regnum Italicum vom 9. Bis 11. Jarhundert', *Quellen und Forschungen*, 69 (1969), 1–71 (pp. 28–33).

because this appears to have been a very important part of how a text narrated the course of a given court case. One of the functions of speech within these formalized texts appears to have been to present a particular point of view to the reader, to tell a story about the dispute at hand in a particular way. One such is the first case I want to examine, that involving Alpcharius, *comes de Alamania*.

Count Alpcharius Tells his Side of the Story

In the course of a judicial hearing which was chaired by Count Leo in the basilica of San Nazaro in Milan at some point between April 823 and 20 June 840,[21] Count Alpcharius made the following autobiographical statement:[22]

> Tempore domni Pippini regis, dum ego eram baiolus Adeliade filie ipsius Pippini regis, conquiseram ego per hanc cartulam[23] **casas et res in** [Italia?],[24] in primis in Cogorezo, secunda in *Alpeiade*,[25] tercia in Samariaco, quarta in *Gemunno*, quinta in Cestello, sexta in Germaniaca, septima in *Anigo*, ista sunt in fines Sepriasca; et due cases et res in ministerio Stazonense, una in Leocarni, alia in *Sumade*; et tercia super fluvio Padi in *vico Florassi*. **Istas casas et res**, ut dixi, per hanc cartulam conquisivi de Rodulfo filio bone memorie Ambrosii de vico Luberniaco fine Brexiana **cum adiacentiis suis in integrum**.[26]

[21] Manaresi, no. 45, pp. 147–51; an original (photograph and better edition in *Il Museo Diplomatico dell'Archivio di Stato di Milano*, ed. by A. R. Natale (Milan, 1971), no. 68: this volume is cited here as Natale, by document number). Natale 68 is not precisely dated because the notary omitted the normal dating clause for some inexplicable reason (Manaresi suggests simple error: Manaresi, no. 45, p. 147). It can be dated to 823–40 because that was the period of the joint rule of Louis the Pious and Lothar in Italy, which the notary does refer to. Discussed by G. Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni nel contado lombardo durante il medioevo: Cologno Monzese. Tomo primo, secoli VIII–X* (Milan, 1968), pp. 93, 125–26.

[22] M. Borgolte, *Die Grafen Alemanniens in Merovingischer und Karolingischer Zeit: Eine Prosopographie* (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 46–48 on Alpcharius.

[23] Not referred to before. Was the physical object being shown at this point in the proceedings?

[24] The lacuna is due to a tear in the manuscript.

[25] The identification of this place is unknown. Henceforth all unidentified place names are given in italics.

[26] This charter still survives, dated 11 September 807 (Milan, Archivio di Stato, MS Museo Diplomatico sec ix 5; an original = Natale 40). It confirms Alpcharius's account. He (in this charter: 'Veroalcheri, ex alamannorum genere, filio Autcherio de finibus Alamanniae, loco ubi nominatur Lintzicawa') bought the property — 'Arbegiate, Samoriaco, Iamundo, Cistello, Germaniaca and Concoreztzo' — with 8 lbs of coined metal, a lot of money or bullion. The

Postea, dum per iussionem[27] domno Pippino rege ambolavi cum predicta Aldelaidam in franciam ad domnum Carolum imperatorem, et dum in eius servicio illic demorassem, sua mercede dedit mihi comitum; et dum pro his et ceteris palatinis serviciis preoccupatus venire in hac patria licenciam non habuissem, tunc iste Ragipertus diaconus et Melfrit germanus et advocatus eius **introierunt et me devestierunt male ordine et contra legem sine ullu iudicio de casis et rebus illis juris meis, que sunt in** Cogozago et in Caello, **que perteneunt de superius scriptis reliquis rebus meis, quas per istam cartulam conquisieram de predicto** Rodulfo et **ita inde fui vestitus sicut et de his reliquis rebus vestituram habui[28] et modo habere videor. Unde quero ut inter nos detur iudicium.**[29]

Alpcharius won his dispute with Ragipert and Melfrit and the record ended up in the archive of the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, presumably arriving there when Alpcharius gave his property to that institution in August 842.[30]

charter was drafted in Brescia, which explains the different orthography of the personal and place names, and its witnesses were the seller's associates (Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni,* pp. 125–26).

[27] Reconstructed by Manaresi.

[28] Namely, a right of possession.

[29] Manaresi, no. 45, pp. 149–50. 'In the time of the Lord King Pippin [d. 810], while I was guardian of Adelhaid, King Pippin's daughter, I acquired, by this charter, **houses and their land in** [Italy?], firstly, in Coarezza, secondly in *Alpeiade*, thirdly in Sumirago, fourthly in *Gemunno*, fifthly in Cislago, sixthly in Germignaga, seventhly in *Anigo*, these are in the territory of Seprio; and two houses and their lands in the district of Stazona, one in Locarno, the other in *Sumade*; and a third over the River Po in *Vico Florasse*. **Those houses and their lands** I acquired, as I said, by this charter from Rodulfus son of Ambrose of good memory from the vicus of Lovernato in the territory of Brescia **in their entirety with their appurtenances**. Afterwards, when I went, on the orders of the lord King Pippin with the abovementioned Adelhaid to Francia to the lord Emperor Charles, and while I delayed there in his service, in his mercy he gave me the countship; and while I was preoccupied with these and other services for the palace I did not have permission to come to this land, at that point the deacon Ragipert and his brother and advocate Melfrit **entered my property and confiscated it from me wrongly and against the law without any judgement, namely those houses and their lands under my control** which are in Coarezza and Caiello, **which pertained to me on account of the abovementioned documents, which by the same charter I acquired from** the same Rodulfus and **whence I was invested and therefore I had an invested right over these things, which I am still seen to have. Therefore I seek that judgement be made between us**.' The phrases in bold are certainly formulaic and are repeated in hundreds of similar documents in Italian archives.

[30] Most of the properties mentioned were given by Alpcharius (described as *de ex genere alamannorum, abitatur vico Samoiraco, filius quondam Authecarii*) to the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio on 26 August 842 (Natale 71, an original). This grant was recorded as a *cartula*

What are we to make of this text? Normally, a historian would read a document like this either in the light of other charters related to the same sequence of events (a 'dossier'),[31] or alongside *placita* of similar structure and style from the same or other archives (i.e. the same textual genre).[32] The point of using these methodologies is to put the events recorded in a series of documents into a plausible narrative of 'what happened' and why, which will convince both her/himself and other historians. In other words, to write the narrative and analytical history which is for academic historians the norm. However, literary scholars might well take a different approach, perhaps reading this *notitia* in the light of other examples of the spoken word found in other textual genres which might be written for completely different purposes. The point of such comparative reading in this case would be to illuminate how ninth-century writers working in different genres coped with the problems of representing oral performance on the written page. So, rather than comparing Manaresi no. 45 with other *notitiae* we might, for example, compare the way Alpcharius speaks with the way in which Andrew of Bergamo used speech in narrating his *Historia*, set down some forty years later.

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ofersionis — a post-obitum gift. The properties were villa Samoriacum, Caello, Arbegiate, Cestelli, Gemaniaca, and others with thirty servants. Authecarius, his brother, had given land to the community on 9 April of that year (Natale 70a, twelfth-century authenticated copy). There is no mention that Alpcharius was a count, so probably he no longer was. Both these grants were part of a wave of royal and aristocratic giving to Sant'Ambrogio sparked off by the gifts of Lothar and Angilbert of 835 (R. Balzaretti, 'The Lands of Saint Ambrose: The Acquisition, Organisation and Exploitation of Landed Property in North-Western Lombardy by the Monastery of Sant'Ambrogio Milan, c. 780–1000' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 1989), pp. 160–61, n. 70; Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni* p. 126).

[31] For example, the well-known dossier of charters from Campione d'Italia: C. La Rocca, 'La legge e la pratica: Potere e rapporti sociali nell'Italia dell'VIII secolo', in *Il futuro dei Longobardi: L'Italia e la costruzione dell'Europe di Carlo Magno. Saggi*, ed. by C. Bertelli and G. P. Brogiolo (Milan, 2000), pp. 45–69 (pp. 59–66); Balzaretti, 'Lands of Saint Ambrose', pp. 205–19; R. Balzaretti, 'Monasteries, Towns and the Countryside: Reciprocal Relationships in the Archdiocese of Milan, 614–814', in *Towns and their Territories between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by G. P. Brogiolo, N. Gauthier, and N. Christie (Leiden, 2000), pp. 235–57 (pp. 244–48). Other Italian examples are R. Balzaretti, 'The Politics of Property in Ninth-Century Milan: Familial Motives and Monastic Strategies in the Village of Inzago', *Melanges de l'École Française de Rome: Moyen Âge*, III (1999), 747–70; C. J. Wickham, *The Mountains and the City* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 40–67; P. Skinner, *Family Power in Southern Italy: The Duchy of Gaeta and its Neighbours 850–1139* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 105–46.

[32] As do Chris Wickham, 'Land Disputes', and Padoa Schioppa, 'Aspetti'.

Andrew records the following argument between Lothar I and Archbishop Angilbert of Milan, which very probably took place at around the same time as the dispute Alpcharius was involved in:

Tunc temporis ecclesie Mediolanensis Angelbertus archiepiscopus regebat.[33] Volebat imperator dicere, quod ille in ipso consilium fuisset. Qui venientes nobiles eum in gratia miserunt; sed dum ante imperatore ducerunt, ille vero tantum caput inclinavit et verba salutatoria dixit. Ad pedes vero noluit venire propter reverentiae honorem aecclesiarum. Tunc imperator dixit: 'Sic contenis te, quasi sanctus Ambrosius sis.' Archiepiscopus respondit: 'Nec ego sanctus Ambrosius, nec tu dominus Deus.' Imperator vero subiunxit ei: 'Itae ad genitorem meum, cuius odium me fecistis habere; reducite me ad pristinam gratiam.' Ille autem haec audiens, perrexit in Frantiam. Hludovicus imperator honorifice eum suscepit. Dum ad mensam uterque reficerent, causa exurgens imperator et dixit: 'Bonae archiepiscope, quid debet facere homo de inimicum suum?' Ille respondit: 'Dominus dixit in evangelio: "Diligite inimicos vestros et benefacite his qui vos oderunt."' Imperator dixit: 'Et si haec non fecero?' Archiepiscopus respondit: 'Si non feceris, non habebis vitam aeternam, si in ipso odio mortuus fueris.' Imperator vero iratus dixit: 'Si mi vindicabo de adversario meo, non habebo vitam aeternam?' Et statim subiunxit: 'Vide Angelbertus, quomodo haec verba defendas.' Et constiuto posito usque in mane. Mane autem facto, coligit imperator sapientes, prout si subito poterant, conflictum habebtes de hac verba contra archiepiscopus. Archiepiscopus eorum presentia dixit: 'Scitis, quia sumus omnes fratres in Christo?' Illi autem respondentes dixit: 'Ergo si scitis, quod fratres sumus, sive liber et servus, sive pater et filius, apostolus Johannes dixit: "Qui odit fratrem suum, omicidia est et omnis omicidam non habet vitam eternam in se manentem." Si ergo odiosus omicida reputabitur, quomodo vitam eternam possessurus erit?' Illi autem convicti, ad haec verba consenserunt. Imperator vero manum in terra ponens, veniam petivit et gratiam filii sui reddidit.[34]

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[33] Angilbert II (d. 859). J.-C. Picard, *Le souvenir des évêques: sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des evêques en Italie du nord des origines au X siècles* (Rome, 1988), pp. 94, 625–26; C. Violante, *La società Milanese nell'età precommunale*, 2nd edn (Naples, 1974), p. 299; Balzaretti, 'Lands of Saint Ambrose', pp. 48–49, 53–54, 148–50. Angilbert was Frankish and was a notable patron of the church of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan (for example, he petitioned Lothar to grant land to the monastery in May 835). Lothar had clearly been concerned to win over the city of Milan in the previous decade because of his links with the comital family of Leo and John of Seprio (see note 42 below).

[34] Andrea Bergomatis, *Historia*, ed. by Waitz, chapter 7, p. 225; *Testi storici e poetici*, ed. by Berto, chapter 11, pp. 42–45. 'At that time Angilbertus was ruling the church of Milan as archbishop. The Emperor [Lothar] wished to speak with him so that he might have his advice and the nobles were sent there by him in grace. But when they came before the Emperor, he [Angilbert] indeed inclined his head somewhat and spoke welcoming words; indeed he [Angilbert] on account of the honour due to a churchman had refused to kneel [or possibly 'to come

Direct comparison of these two brief spoken narratives confirms that they are different types of narrative. To maximize the dramatic effect of his tale Andrew, who was writing some forty years after these events, presented Lothar's dialogue with Angilbert as real speech. On the surface it looks as though we are dealing with a real encounter between emperor and archbishop. However, as no other source records the meeting and argument,[35] most historians think Andrew made it up.[36] Why then did Andrew record it? It may be that it was included simply to entertain his readers with a lively vignette. The prospect of an emperor teasing an archbishop may have amused Andrew, a humble priest. In my view though, a didactic purpose is more likely. From his inclusion of scriptural quotations and his obviously moralizing tone it would seem that Andrew's prime aim was to teach his readers about how kings and bishops ought to behave. The result is

on foot']. Then the Emperor said: "So you behave as though you were Saint Ambrose!" The Archbishop replied: "I am not Saint Ambrose but neither are you the Lord God." At this the Emperor added: "Go to my father whose hatred for me you have caused; bring me back to un-blemished grace!" Angilbert on hearing this went off to Francia. The Emperor Louis received him with honour. While they were dining at table a question occurred to the Emperor who said: "Good archbishop what ought to be done to a man who is one's enemy?" He replied: "The lord said in the Gospel: 'Value highly your enemies and be generous to those you hate.'" [Matthew 5. 44]. The Emperor said: "And if I do not do this?" Then Angilbert replied: "If you do not do this you will not have eternal life and you will die from this hatred." Then the Emperor said angrily: "If I conquer my opponent shall I not have eternal life?" And immediately he added: "See Angilbert if you can defend these words!" And having reached this position they waited until the following day. On that day the Emperor gathered together his advisers to see if they could argue the case against the Archbishop. The Archbishop said in their presence: "You know that we are all brothers in Christ?" They replied: "We know that we pray to one Father in Heaven." Then he said: "Therefore if you know that we are all brothers, whether free or unfree, father or son and that John the Apostle said: 'Who hates his brothers is a murderer and no murderer has eternal life dwelling in him.' If therefore murder can be ascribed to hatred how can hatred lead to eternal life?" [Luke 21. 31]. They were convinced by his words. The Emperor placing his hand on the ground sought forgiveness and he returned his son to favour.' My translation of this at times unclear passage differs in several places from Berto's.

[35] This is surprising because both Lothar and Angilbert appear in many other contemporary documents: *Annals of St. Bertin*, trans. by J. L. Nelson (Manchester, 1991), *s.a.* 834 and 836; Louis sent embassies to Lothar in Italy. Wala went to see Louis, so perhaps Angilbert could also have done.

[36] C. J. Wickham, 'Lawyer's Time: History and Memory in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Italy', in his *Land and Power*, pp. 275–93, takes a dim view of Andrew's efforts (pp. 279–80) which he regards as having the 'narrative morphology characteristic of "folk-tale"'; Buc, *Dangers of Ritual*, p. 239.

certainly a very ninth-century tale of the power of bishops to check emperors. Why, though, did Andrew choose this form of spoken dialogue to narrate his 'folk-tale'? He could, after all, have simply told us what happened in the third person as he normally did. His narrative may well have been influenced by hagiographical sources, where the dialogue form is quite common.[37] It is possible — probable in my view — that he was influenced by reading about the encounter between Ambrose and Theodosius, as recorded in Paulinus's *Vita Ambrosii*, which as a priest within the archdiocese of Milan he is highly likely to have come into contact with.[38] Here Paulinus has Ambrose and Theodosius argue in direct speech, and the struggle for power between bishop and emperor appears to be his implicit narrative theme. Andrew was also probably influenced by his reading of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* which he had summarized as a preface to his own continuation of it.[39] Many of Paul's most finely written stories — such as the encounter between Theodelinda and Authari or the tale of Cunimund and Alahis — rely heavily on direct speech for their literary effects.[40]

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[37] Most obviously Gregory's *Dialogues*, which Andrew could well have read.

[38] Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii*, chapter 23: *Paolino di Milano: Vita di S. Ambrogio*, ed. by M. Pellegrino (Rome, 1961), p. 85; and B. Ramsey, *Ambrose* (London, 1997), p. 205. Pellegrino's edition needs to be read alongside the criticisms of it made by L. Ruggini, 'Su la fortuna della vita Ambrosii', *Athenaeum*, n.s., 41 (1963), 98–110, and A. Paredi, 'Paulinus of Milan', *Sacris Erudiri*, 14 (1963), 206–30. Paredi argues persuasively that, although no manuscript of ninth-century date which can definitely be attributed to a Milanese scriptorium has survived, Paulinus's work was well-known in ninth-century Milan and so it is certainly possible that Andrew of Bergamo could have read a copy. Andrew might also have known the reworking of Paulinus's *vita* which may have been made precisely when he himself was writing: *Recherches sur Saint Ambroise: 'vies' anciennes, culture, iconographie*, ed. by P. Courcelle (Paris, 1973), pp. 49–121; and A. Paredi, *Vita e meriti di S. Ambrogio: testo inedito del secolo non illustrato con le miniature del salterio di Arnolfo* (Milan, 1964). However, I have compared the two texts closely and can find no significant linguistic parallels which might suggest that Andrew was copying directly from this source. The best discussion of this latter text is now C. Pilsworth, 'Representations of Sanctity in Milan and Ravenna c. 400–900 A.D.' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1998), summarized in Pilsworth, 'Medicine and Hagiography in Italy c. 800–c.1000', *Social History of Medicine*, 13 (2000), 253–64 (pp. 260–62). I deal with Andrew at greater length in my forthcoming *North Italian Histories c.600–c.1000* (Manchester Medieval Sources).

[39] Andrea Bergomatis, *Historia*, ed. by Waitz, chapter 1, pp. 221–23; *Testi storici e poetici*, ed. by Berto, chapter 1, pp. 22–33.

[40] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by Bethmann and Waitz, III, 30, pp. 109–10; V, 38–41, pp. 157–61.

Andrew's *Historia*, like Agnellus of Ravenna's *Liber Pontificalis*, is therefore a very interesting example of dramatic imagination at work in ninth-century historical writing, and in this sense it is primarily a literary — rather than a historical — creation.[41]

If we return to Alpcharius's testimony with Andrew's narrative of Lothar and Angilbert in mind, it is now clear that this is another sort of narrative, even though both writers use reported speech. Andrew was not, as far as is known, present at any meeting between Angilbert and Lothar or Louis. In contrast, there are several reasons for thinking that Manaresi no. 45 may preserve a verbatim record of what Alpcharius actually said in order to win his case in court. Firstly, Sigempert, the notary who wrote the *notitia*, claims that Count Leo, who chaired the case, dictated the record to him: 'ex dictato predicti Leonis comitis scripsi.'[42] Such a statement is in fact very unusual in records of this type at this period, and it is this which initially prompted me to wonder if Alpcharius's words were indeed taken down literally as the text claims. This does not mean that Sigempert was in court, but obviously does mean that Leo was. Secondly, we may further suppose that Alpcharius was responding to questions from the court's chairman Count Leo about which properties he had in Italy, how he acquired them, and the circumstances in which his opponents confiscated them. We can even try to reconstruct the questions asked: 'How did you acquire these properties? Where were you when Ragipert and Melfrit supposedly confiscated your land?'[43]

However, thinking a bit more closely about how Count Alpcharius spoke and what he said, it is clear that Sigempert cannot have written down Alpcharius's

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[41] Compare Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, *Writing Ravenna: The 'Liber Pontificalis' of Andreas Agnellus* (Ann Arbor, 1995), pp. 67–81, and Agnellus of Ravenna, *The Book of the Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna*, trans. by D. M. Deliyannis (Washington, DC, 2004), pp. 57–65, on Agnellus's orality.

[42] Manaresi, no. 45, p. 151. 'I wrote this from the dictation of the aforesaid Count Leo.' Count Leo's career was brilliantly reconstructed by Donald Bullough, 'Leo, *qui apud Hlotharium magni loci habebatur*, et le gouvernement du *Regnum Italiae* à l'époque carolingienne', *Le Moyen Age*, series 16, 4 (1961), 221–45. For dictation, see Petrucci, *Writers and Readers*, pp. 146–47, and Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, p. 41.

[43] In early medieval courts, as in ours today, people did not simply volunteer information at random but, like all witnesses, they were asked questions. Their responses may have been conditioned by what they were asked and how. How this 'inquisitorial' culture, which extended beyond the court room to investigations and visitations by churchmen, conditioned narrative forms could do with further research: see Wickham, *Land and Power*, pp. 244–45, and 'Gossip and Resistance'; B. Hamilton, *The Medieval Inquisition* (London, 1981), pp. 40–48.

words exactly as he spoke them. The scribe would have us believe that the Count spoke in Latin, the normal language of written record in this part of Italy at this time, but what spoken Latin may have been like in ninth-century Milan is not knowable. Alpcharius, though, was from Alemannia and is not likely to have spoken Latin (in whatever form) but a Germanic vernacular. Nonetheless, whatever language he spoke, the phrases reported here in Latin are in fact quite informal and word order is, for example, more characteristic of the spoken than the written language (namely, verbs appearing early on in a sentence, simple vocabulary). The fact that Alpcharius speaks in the first person adds both a sense of immediacy and a feel of reality to this passage. All in all, what we have could plausibly be a translation into Latin of what Alpcharius said in his native tongue.[44]

Next, Alpcharius cited a charter (*cartula*) demonstrating his ownership of the properties in question (and presumably actually produced the physical object in court).[45] This document still survives, helping to buttress the veracity of his tale. Then, and this is the most startling part of the Count's statement, he explains why he was not in Italy when the 'theft' of his property took place. It is here that he seems to play his trump card: he makes clear his very close connections to the royal family, as the tutor of one of Charlemagne's granddaughters, Adelhaid.[46] Saying this in the 830s would not necessarily have done him any favours in this particular court because political life within Milan had been difficult since Pippin's demise.[47] Adelhaid's brother was the ill-fated King Bernard, murdered

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[44] D. H. Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 30–48, gives a clear idea of what is known about the Germanic vocabulary of law, which might have been familiar to Alpcharius. A clear summary of the complex issues surrounding early medieval spoken Latin is Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy*, pp. 132–38.

[45] Increasingly common in Italian courts at this time: Wickham, *Land and Power*, p. 240.

[46] Adelhaid is mentioned by Einhard, *Vita Karoli magni* 19, along with her four sisters. Charlemagne 'arranged for his granddaughters to be raised alongside his own daughters', after their father Pippin had died in July 810: *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard*, trans. into English by Paul Edward Dutton (Peterborough, Ont., 1998), p. 29. Presumably, this was at the court in Aachen. For the Italian *baiuli*, see D. A. Bullough, '*Baiuli* in the Carolingian *regnum langobardorum* and the Career of Abbot Waldo', *EHR*, 77, 305 (1962), 625–37.

[47] Summarized by Balzaretti, 'Politics of Property', pp. 750–51, drawing on T. F. X. Noble, 'The Revolt of King Bernard of Italy in 817: Its Causes and Consequences', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 15 (1974), 315–26; A. M. Ambrosioni, 'Gli arcivescovi nella vita di Milano', in *Milano e i Milanesi prima del Mille (VIII–X secolo)*, X Congresso internazionale di studi sull'alto medioevo (Spoleto, 1986), pp. 85–118 (p. 98); J. Jarnut, 'Kaiser Ludwig der Fromme und König

on the orders of Louis the Pious, his uncle. Bernard had been supported by
Archbishop Anselm I of Milan, who was then deposed. At the time Alpcharius
gave his testimony, new men were in charge of the city — Count Leo and
Archbishop Angilbert II, both supporters of Louis. Alpcharius therefore, being
associated with the old regime, was potentially making a very risky public
political statement by reminding his audience of his close connections with
Pippin's discredited family.[48] As such it sheds interesting — and forgotten —
light on the fallout from Bernard's rebellion. Perhaps indeed the claim that the
text was actually dictated hints that Alpcharius's words were in some way
especially important or controversial?

More interesting from the perspective of narrative than this contextual infor-
mation is the fact that Alpcharius includes details of his own personal history in
the form of a story narrated over a period of time: a very selective 'life story'.[49]
The scribe presents him as speaking in the past tense. He begins 'in King Pip-
pin's time' (in fact September 807 — the date of the surviving charter he refers
to); his trip to Francia happened before July 810 (when King Pippin died); and
he was giving testimony 'now' (sometime between 823 and 840, the period of
Louis's and Lothar's joint rule).[50] His personal details are *nowhere else* recorded
and they would seem not to have been strictly necessary for winning the case: the
807 charter should have provided adequate proof. For nineteenth-century critics
the lack of direct corroboration for recorded information was a flaw in such
documents and laid their evidence open to question. However, now it is precisely
the personal, unique, nature of this brief narrative which is interesting for it is
likely to represent a fairly close approximation of what Alpcharius actually said.
This point is reinforced by the fact that, when it comes to the legal crux of the

Bernhard von Italien: Der Versuch einer Rehabilitierung', *Studi Medievali*, 30 (1989), 637–48;
P. Depreux, 'Das Königtum Bernhards von Italien und sein Verhältnis zum Kaisertum',
Quellen und Forschungen aus Italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken, 72 (1992), 1–25; and
G. Bührer-Thierry, '"Just Anger" or "Vengeful Anger"? The Punishment of Blinding in the
Early Medieval West', in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. by
B. H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY, 1998), pp. 75–92 (pp. 81–88).

[48] Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni*, p. 126.

[49] M. Chamberlain and P. Thompson, 'Introduction: Genre and Narrative in Life Stories',
in *Narrative and Genre*, ed. by Chamberlain and Thompson, pp. 1–19, deals thoroughly with
the relationship between autobiographical narratives and the 'repertoire of genre' available
(p. 14).

[50] Bullough argues for sometime in the 830s (note 42 above).

case, Alpcharius uses words and phrases which were indeed the standard apparatus of disputes at this time all over northern Italy. Litigants everywhere made accusations of wrongful entry to their property, using standardized combinations of *malo ordine*, *contra lege*, and *introire*, and of unjust transfer, using *vestire*, *devestire*, and *revestire*.[51] This part of what Alpcharius says, marked in bold on the text quoted above, was more likely to have been concocted by the scribe Sigempert after the event according to a standard formulary.[52] Ragipert and Melfrit, the men Alpcharius was in dispute with, also merit attention as they too — and their unnamed advocate — 'spoke' in this text. First, they responded to Alpcharius saying that they had taken possession of his property but legally *per cartulam*.[53] Then, after many other disputes (*contenciones*) between the two sides they caved in:

> Certe veritatem dicamus, quia dum tu in hac patria non esses et ad placitum te habere non poteramus, introivimus in ipsis casis et rebus, tamen, ut diximus, per monimen; set cum nobis longum sit hanc causam ventilandum et maixmo labore ad auctorem dandum, concredimus nos modo quia ipsas defendere nullatenus possumus, set volumus te exinde revestire.[54]

We have within this *notitia* rival narratives of what had happened, both purporting to be true. It is important to remember that they are *both* recorded, even though only one side won.[55]

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[51] Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 67–72; S. Reynolds, *Fief and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994), p. 194 (*investitura*).

[52] The existence of such formularies is fairly certain, although no early ones have survived from Northern Italy: Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy*, p. 209.

[53] Padoa Schioppa, 'Aspetti', p. 18.

[54] Manaresi, no. 45, pp. 150–51. 'Surely we tell the truth, because while you were not in this land [*patria*] and we were not able to bring you to court, we entered those houses and lands, however, as we have said, by document [i.e. the right accruing from possessing a document]; but as this case has dragged on for us so long [. . .] we want you to retake possession.'

[55] The most extreme view of the 'reality' of such records is Petrucci's: 'But neither public nor private documentation was put into place with the primary purpose of constituting evidence or memory of one or more events, whose factual reality outside the tight formal structures of written discourse was and remains almost impossible to determine' (*Writers and Readers*, p. 250). The conventional view is well expressed by C. Violante, *Atti privati e storia medievale* (Rome, 1982). H. Wolfram, 'Political Theory and Narrative in Charters', *Viator*, 26 (1995), 39–51, is a good example of the way in which German-speaking scholars approach the relationship between diplomatic structure and narrative in charters, although he deals here with royal *diplomata* rather than 'private' texts.

Peasants Speak about their Customs

The apparently simple record of a court case examined so far turns out to be rather more complex than it initially seemed. If read as a *literary* production and not simply as a repository of facts for historians, it raises many fascinating issues. To get further we need to expand the analysis to consider the speech recorded in this *placitum* in the light of that recorded in others. One of the most interesting questions that the Alpcharius case raises is what the inclusion of spoken narrative adds to such a record that would not be there if it were left out. We have already noted the possibility that the inclusion of reported speech in formal *placita* — and less formal *notitiae* — may have been necessary to authenticate a written record of what had physically happened in court. Michael Clanchy has made the point that the written word needed reinforcement if it was to represent the performance which making promises in court entailed.[56] Indeed, even those documents which do not reproduce real or realistic speech assume oral performance in court. A good example is a Milanese case, a *notitia* dated 22 May 822 which may be contemporary with the Alpcharius case, where no direct speech is recorded.[57] Yet the whole record is predicated on the fact that the participants *did* speak in court. The monastery of Sant'Ambrogio had claimed that Dominicus and his wife Luba were of servile status and owed dues to the community. The couple were separately asked to declare their free status in the court room. They could not do so. Their own words are not given this time but the scribe Jona (very probably a monk, given his name), who wrote 'hunc notitia pro perpetim firmidatem ad parte monasterii sancti Ambrosii'[58] (a standard formula), made sure that it was absolutely clear in the text that Luba had pronounced her own servility:

> Quod superius menime memoravimus, subter adfiximus. Interrogada est ipsa Luba ad suprascriptis audidoribus, ut si ipsa aliquid poterint perportare de sua livertate; qui professa est et ida manifestavit sicuti iugale Dominico, quod nulla de sua livertate nec

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[56] M. Clanchy, 'Medieval Mentalities and Primitive Legal Practice', in *Law, Laity and Solidarities: Essays in Honour of Susan Reynolds*, ed. by P. Stafford, J. L. Nelson, and J. Martindale (Manchester, 2001), pp. 83–94 (p. 94).

[57] Manaresi, no. 34. This is the earliest surviving dispute case from Milan and I discuss it at greater length in my forthcoming book *The Lands of Saint Ambrose: Monks and Society in Early Medieval Milan* (Turnhout) and 'Lands of St Ambrose', pp. 236–40 (where its place within a dossier of charters from the Valtellina is examined).

[58] 'this notice for the perpetual stability of the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio'.

de sua agnitione facere nec perportare poterit, nisi deveri suprascripti monasterii sancti Ambrosii.[59]

Crucially, this record was not an 'official' one dictated by the chairman of the court to his scribe but was instead drawn up by a monk to record a monastic victory. It appears that the monks wished to remember total capitulation, exemplified by the suppression of the losing side's actual 'oral performance' within the written record itself. A very similar example, perhaps modelled on the text of 822, is found in another monastic charter dating to 870.[60] This time Magnefred, *pertinens eidem monasterio, is* allowed to speak. He says:

> Hoc veritas est, velare non quero nec posso, quia in peccatis, dum me cum ipse Melesone aldione istius monasterii commisi, sic eum ferivi unde Melesus mortuus fuit; sed minime tantum habeo de mobilibus, unde ipsa compositio dare aut persolvere possum; sed habeo in aliquantulum de casellula et terrula mea: peto ut eam, in quantum etsi, pro ipsa compositione a parte istius monasterii recipere debeatis de mobilia mea, in quo habeo, recipere debeatis mobilia mea, in quo habeo, usque ad ipsa compositione impendum.[61]

Why this remarkable statement from a lowly dependent is included in this record is impossible to establish with certainty.[62] It may be that by including

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[59] Manaresi, no. 34, pp. 107–08. 'So that we remember the above things properly, we have affixed the following below. Luba herself was asked by those hearing the case if she could vouch for her own free status; she declared as her husband had done that she could not vouch for her own free status or that of her relatives and that therefore they should be dependants of the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio.' This sentence, which is not formulaic, appears tacked on in an odd place in the text, almost as an afterthought, breaching the normal diplomatic form for such a document.

[60] This *notitia* is an unauthenticated copy made in the late ninth or early tenth century (Milan, Archivio di Stato, MS Pergamene secolo IX, no. 82). It was not published by Manaresi. The standard editions are *Codex Diplomaticus Langobardiae*, ed. by G. Porro-Lambertenghi (Milan, 1873) (hereafter *CDL*), no. 249 and (better) Natale 122. Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni*, p. 96.

[61] *CDL*, no. 249, p. 424. 'This is the truth, I neither can nor seek to conceal that, when sinfully I fought with Meleso, an *aldius* of the monastery, I hit him, whence Meleso died; but I have so few moveable goods which I could hand over to pay the fine; but I have a little property in the form of my small house and its land: I beg that you, on behalf of the monastery, should accept and have that which there is, for this fine. But since that which I have is hardly of sufficient value for the fine, you should receive of my moveables, which I have, to the point at which the fine is paid off.'

[62] I treat this case at greater length in *The Lands of Saint Ambrose*, including the possibility that the document is a deliberate fake. Wickham's view that 'there is nothing unusual about the procedure of the case, even though it originated in a crime of violence' (*Land and Power*,

reported direct speech Rachibert the scribe (*notarius*) was trying to mimic the more formal style of a *placitum* record, to give this *notitia* greater authenticity should it ever be needed as evidence. Or maybe notaries and other scribes were part of a written culture which valued the spoken word highly, and automatically included it in the texts they drafted? Or perhaps his monastic patrons asked him to include it, because the monks wished to make sure that the killer Magnefred got his just reward in heaven?[63] Otherwise, it is hard to see why such a process was recorded in writing at all — surely Magnefred, as a monastic dependent, could not realistically hope to challenge the abbot's judicial power?

Other Milanese court cases contain plenty of speaking by peasants.[64] A much-discussed example is a case heard in 900–901 when men from the village of Cusago disputed their personal status with Count Sigifred of Milan, as recorded in two *placita*.[65] They won, on the basis that they owned property and therefore should be free rather than unfree men. The first record contains a lengthy statement of their rights in the first person plural made collectively by eleven men from the village, the crux of which is this:

> Et nos ei dedimus responsum quod nos de nostris personis non aldii sed liberi homines esse deberemus, et parentibus nostris liberi homines fuissent, et nos in eadem libertate de libero patre et libera matre nati essemus, et condictionaliter ad ipsum curtem Palatiolo nec parti comiti Mediolanensi nunquam operas fecissemus, nisi tantum habemus in loco et fundo Blestatio aliquantam terram de parentibus [nostris], et nos ad ipsam curtem Palatiolo operas fecissemus pro omni ebdomada una ad manus.[66]

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p. 247) does not take into account the oddities of both the form and the preservation of the record. Similar 'criminal' cases from elsewhere in Europe are discussed by J. L. Nelson, 'Literacy in Carolingian Government', in *Uses of Literacy*, ed. by McKitterick, pp. 258–96 (p. 275); and C. J. Wickham, *Studi sulla società degli Appennini nell'altomedievo: contadini, signori e insediamento nel territorio di Valva (Sulmona)* (Bologna, 1982), pp. 20–26.

[63] Clanchy, 'Medieval Mentalities', p. 88: 'If there was going to be a Last Judgement, it was not irrational to prepare documentation for it.'

[64] Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance', p. 6; cf. Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, pp. 92–114 on 'Peasant Memories'.

[65] Manaresi, no. 110 (pp. 405–10) and no. 112 (pp. 414–18), an unauthenticated copy of the eleventh or twelfth century, which reports the text of number 110 within number 112. The case against the Count was heard by the Count himself! Chris Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy* (Basingstoke, 1981), pp. 109–12, and Giovanni Tabacco, *I liberi del re nell'Italia Carolingia e Postcarolingia* (Spoleto, 1966), pp. 90–94.

[66] Manaresi, no. 110, p. 407. 'And we answered him that we should be completely free men in our persons not half free, that our relatives had been free men, that we were born into that

Thirteen noble and credible men ('nobeles et credentes homines') were asked
what they knew about the case and they testified in favour of the peasants who
then won their case.[67] They were indeed free men. It almost appears that the
document was written at the request of the peasants themselves. Another
example of peasant testimony is found in the 905 Limonta record when thirty-
five named dependants of Sant'Ambrogio made a very lengthy statement in
response to the monastic accusation that they were monastic *servi*.[68] These few
texts constitute some of the earliest recorded peasant speech in European history
— far earlier than the famous inhabitants of the pages of *Montaillou*. Their
testimony can be added to the growing historiography of early medieval peasant
life.[69] Importantly, most such spoken narratives of peasant oppression — narra-
tives of submission perhaps, designed to blot out their 'rival' narrative of freedom
— are preserved as unauthenticated copies written by monastic scribes. This is
supremely ironic. The monks who had these charters made to record their suc-
cessful suppression of the old customary practices of their new work force have
inadvertently preserved for us a way into the thought world of the clichéd 'silent
majority'. Nonetheless, it has to be admitted that there are big methodological
issues to be faced if we try to get to grips with the speech embedded in written
records, whether it was spoken by a count or a peasant. Objections to the vera-
city of the speech lay behind much of the criticism, for example, of the classic
works of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie and Carlo Ginzburg, who tried to reclaim
the 'popular culture' of peasant voices from the inquisitorial records where they
had lain silent for centuries. Faced by a single report of what was supposedly
spoken, drawn up by members of the Catholic clerical elite, the ears of many his-
torians immediately started tingling. Of course we can never know if the words

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freedom of free fathers and mothers, and owing to that condition we had never made returns
to that estate of Palazzolo nor to the county of Milan, except that we had a little land from our
parents in Bestazzo, and we made returns to the Palazzolo estate every week by hand.'

[67] Such group testimony was common across Europe: *Settlement of Disputes*, ed. by Davies
and Fouracre, p. 220.

[68] Manaresi, no. 117, pp. 431–36. Discussed by Balzaretti, 'Monastery of Sant'Ambrogio',
p. 9 with references.

[69] Best approached via a series of articles by Chris Wickham: 'Problems of Comparing
Rural Societies in Early Medieval Western Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*,
6th series, 2 (1992), 221–46, repr. with additions in his *Land and Power*, pp. 201–26; 'Rural
Society in Carolingian Europe', in *New Cambridge Medieval History*, ed. by McKitterick, pp.
510–37; 'Rural Economy and Society', in *Italy in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by La Rocca, pp.
118–43.

attributed to peasants in records made by and for an elite were actually uttered by them, but this ignorance does not really matter as reported speech in any text is always *possible* speech, which must have made sense to those who commissioned, wrote, and read the documents concerned. Opinions which were completely alien to their own societies were hardly likely to have occurred to anyone.[70]

Monastic Advocates and an Archbishop

The peasants' monastic 'lords and masters' also figure in *placita* records. Advocates who represented the monks of Sant'Ambrogio in court employed many of the same spoken phrases as their opponents, referring often to written evidence, the collective memory of the monastic community.[71] For example, in a case heard in the monastic buildings at Sant'Ambrogio in October 896 in front of Count Amedeus,[72] Anselm, the advocate, gave a typical performance. First he made a long opening statement outlining the case, ending with:

> Unde peto ego Anselmus advocatus, ut in elimosina domni imperatoris, et ut, postquam advocatus ipsius monasterii Auvue nec nullam talem personam invenire possumus, qualiter de ipsis casis et rebus preceptas et cum alias firmitates parati fuimus et sumus inde in racionem standum, ut a parte ipsius monasterii de ipsos sex mansos investire faciatis, ut ipsum cenubium sancti Ambrosii suam abead ac tenead vestituram, sicut actenus abuit, antequam missi Arnulfi regis pars ipsius monasterii devestissent.[73]

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[70] Susan Reynolds, 'Social Mentalities and the Case of Medieval Scepticism', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 1 (1991), 21–42.

[71] Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 80–114; G. Declercq, 'Originals and Cartularies: The Organization of Archival Memory (Ninth–Eleventh Centuries)', in *Charters and the Use of the Written Word*, ed. by Heideker, pp. 147–70; J. S. Barrow, 'How the Twelfth-Century Monks of Worcester Perceived their Past', in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. by P. Magdalino (London, 1992), pp. 53–74.

[72] Manaresi, no. 101, pp. 364–67; Natale 160.

[73] Manaresi, no. 101, p. 366. 'Whence I, Anselm, the advocate seek, from the merciful lord emperor, that we should not meet with the advocate of the monastery of Reichenau nor any such person, as we had obtained grants and other signed documents concerning those houses and lands and thus we have good reason that you should invest the monastic side with those six *mansi* so that that monastery of Saint Ambrose should have and retain the *vestitura* as it had before the missi of King Arnulf divested the monastic side.'

On this occasion the opposing advocate — from the monastery of Reichenau in Alemannia — did not turn up and the case collapsed.[74] Other advocates' speaking is recorded in *placita* from 844 (a long statement by Teutpald with replies from Teutpert, Ansulf *scabinus*, and Bruning),[75] January 865 (a joint statement from the monastic *prepositus* and advocate),[76] and March 865 (a curt statement from the advocate, 'Tell me your response', followed by a whole series of replies).[77] Looking at the narratives attributed to advocates as a whole there is some evidence of linguistic variation, which may have depended on who was speaking: in 896 (Limonta) the monastic advocate appears to use very respectful language in front of the Emperor Lothar whereas in 865 (Como) a very abrupt tone is used. Yet these examples do appear much more standardized than those we have looked at so far, which is not unexpected if advocates had some legal training as is likely.

My final example occurs in a record of another dispute about land in Cologno Monzese between the monastery of Sant'Ambrogio and Lupus of Schianno held on 17 May 859.[78] This record opens with indirect speech and a few brief phrases from the two parties in dispute (Lupus and Ambrosius, the monastic advocate). This is followed by a longer statement made by Archbishop

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[74] Balzaretti, 'Monastery of Sant'Ambrogio', p. 6.

[75] 'Bene ricordo, quia venerunt in iuditio mei presentia et Isencarii sculdassii et relicorum, et causa ipsa, qualiter iste Teupaldo avocatus retuli, sic factum est' (Ansulf: 'I remember well when Isencarius the *sculdasius* and others came into my presence for judgement and the case was settled in the way that Teutpert has recalled'); and 'Non sum amplius auctor, nec de casis, nec de res, nec familia, nisi tantum de fruges de ipsas res, et decaterunt de auctorum iste Teutperto et filio suo Adelberto' (Bruning: 'I am not the full author, not of the houses, nor the goods, nor the family, nor any of the fruits of those properties, and Teutpert and his son Adelbert held the right of author'): Manaresi, no. 48, p. 159; case discussed by Wickham, *Land and Power*, pp. 248–49.

[76] Manaresi, no. 67, pp. 242–46.

[77] 'Mitte mihi responsum de casis et rebus illis in vico Dugno et Gravedona, qui pertinet ad parte monasterii sancti Ambrosii' ('Give me an answer concerning those houses and lands in the vicus of Dongo and Gravedona, which pertain to the monastery of Saint Ambrose'). The brothers' reply: 'Casis et rebus ipsis, quod dicitis, habemus et detinemus pro eo quia aviani nostre fuit, et nos per legem hereditatem habere debemus' ('Those houses and lands of which you speak, we have and hold because our grandparents had them and we should have them according to the law of inheritance'): Manaresi, no. 68, p. 247.

[78] Manaresi, no. 64, pp. 229–34; Natale 101, an original. Wickham, 'Land Disputes', p. 120; Rossetti, *Società e istituzioni*, pp. 81–95.

Angilbert II, whom we have already encountered in Andrew's *Historia* observed in argument with Lothar. This is what he says here:

> Vere de hac causa ego scio, et mihi bene cognitum est, quia aliter a parte domui nostri pertinere non debet, nec exinde talem rationem non abemus, per quod eum da parte ipsius monasterii legibus subtraere debeamus, nisi tantum quod noster antecessor eumdem ipsum monasterium sua sponte tullit, et dedit eum in benefitio ad vassallo suo; **sed postea multotiens et frequenter audivi abbates da partes ipsius monasterii ab antecessore meo domno Angilberto archiepiscopus pulsantes et exinde reclamantes iustitiam, querentes ut eas ad ipsum monasterium redderit**; nam exinde a parte domui nostris nullam aliam talem rationem abemus, per quod legibus eas da parte ipsius monasterii subtraere debeamus, eo quod legibus eas da parte ipsius monasterii per datum Ariberti, cuius rebus ipsis propriis fuerunt, pertinere debent abendum.[79]

Just like Alpcharius, Angilbert's voice interrupts the normal diplomatic structure of this document. His statement about abbots crying out for justice is not formulaic — there is no other such phrase in the Sant'Ambrogio corpus — and once again this statement in the first person demonstrates political interests ranging far beyond the dispute at hand, with the Archbishop trying to distance himself from the actions of his predecessor.

What do these three examples — peasants trying to defend their customs, advocates arguing *pro monasterio*, and an archbishop overturning the acts of his predecessor — add to our understanding of Alpcharius's speech discussed earlier? As noted, *how* people speak and in what language is as important as what they speak about. The reported speaking which I have briefly examined here accords perfectly well with what we know from other texts about the people who are speaking: they say what we might expect them to, and in particular people of varying social status talk about different things. It seems to me that these simple differences increase the likelihood that these narratives are true to life. Those who drafted the texts wanted, of course, to convince readers that the narratives contained within them *were* true. Truth claims are linked closely with speaking

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[79] Manaresi, no. 64, pp. 232–33. 'Truly concerning this case I know, and it was well understood by me, that it should not pertain to our household, nor, since we haven't any reason otherwise, should we take it from the monastic side according to the laws, except that our predecessor took it from the monastic side by his own wish and gave it in benefice to his vassal; **but afterwards I heard very often that abbots on behalf of the monastic side had cried out vigorously for justice from my predecessor lord Angilbert seeking that those things be returned to the monastery**; and since we have no reason at all that we should take legally those things from the monastic side for our household, they should legally pertain to the monastic side as a result of the gift of Aribert, whose properties they were.'

in the first person (singular or plural) and the narrating often begins with 'truly' (*vere*) or 'this is the truth' (*hoc veritas est*). When writers of history did this — like Andrew of Bergamo's 'I speak the truth in Christ' — historians now often see this as evidence of reliable 'eyewitness' reporting. Maybe we should see charters in the same light. Although the 'truth' phrases may be formulaic, it is still interesting that truthfulness is associated with speaking even in written texts.

Nonetheless, the presence of speech in charter texts may create a tension between record and story, written and oral, fact and fiction. Is this recorded speech, presented as a record of what was said, merely a representation of the oral, there to give the text a feeling of reality in much the same way as invented speeches in classical histories were meant to give the impression of reality without actually being real speeches (*inventio*)? The analytical problem posed by the role of the rhetorical traditions of antiquity within early medieval texts is, of course, a complex issue.[80] Many early medieval writers were sufficiently well versed in earlier traditions that much of their supposedly 'reported' speech must surely have been invented simply to give the text concerned the expected flavour of reality. In long-established genres we cannot naively presume that speech recorded in written texts was actually spoken in the form recorded, particularly where the subject matter is highly allegorical or allusive, such as *vitae* or *miracula*. Obviously, the answer we give has significant consequences for our understanding of the empirical value of *placita* records and the 'facts' they may or may not contain. I would suggest that where the speech escapes the bounds of the normal formulae and diplomatic organization of a text — Alpcharius's 'autobiography', Magnefred's 'pleading', Angilbert's 'recollections' of abbots crying out — it is a record of things actually said.

It is worth adding that few women 'speak' in these documents. Women do appear in *placita* records but as objects in the narratives of men. This does not mean that women were unimportant in this form of narrative. Adelhaid is talked about by Count Alpcharius, although, as I've suggested, her presence in this narrative is crucial to its meaning. Similarly Luba, talked about in the narrative of the 822 case, was also at the heart of its meaning. This lack of speaking women is also characteristic of Andrew of Bergamo's short *historia*. However, in the *historia* form it was possible for women to 'speak': Andrew seems to have made a conscious decision to leave them out. But in *notitiae* women rarely, if ever, speak, and this may well be a function of both the form and of the legal context

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[80] There is a good discussion of this by Paul Ricoeur, 'History and Rhetoric', in *The Social Responsibility of the Historian*, ed. by F. Bédarida (Providence, RI, 1994), pp. 7–24.

in which it was produced as women had little formal role in Italian law at this time. This absence of women from legal narratives may be worth thinking about in the light of current understandings of how gender relationships were articulated in the early medieval world.[81]

So far I have brought out the differences between 'literary' historical narrative (as represented by Andrew's *Historia*) and the 'documentary', reporting, style normally thought characteristic of *notitiae*. But the similarities are just as thought-provoking. In the case of Alpcharius's little speech, I am struck by its 'literary' qualities: when divested of its legal formulae it could slip into Andrew's history quite easily.[82] This raises the question of how notaries composed those parts of a text which are clearly not based on legal formularies. It may be that notaries were much better versed in what we call literature than is normally thought.[83] Maybe Sigempert, the scribe who recorded Alpcharius's tale, had read Paul's *Historia Langobardorum* just as Andrew of Bergamo did? If so, the *HL* would have provided much 'model' direct speech. And vice versa: writers like Andrew may well have been involved in drafting charters, *placita*, and other sorts of 'practical' documents. Were writers of history drawing on narratives in *notitiae* and other charter types when composing speeches for their histories? Did Andrew of Bergamo have any part in the world of charters? My suspicions are that he was involved, for he may well be the person who appears as 'Andrea presbiter misso domni Garibaldi episcopo' in a charter of exchange drawn up in

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[81] There is little, for example, about gender and form in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, ed. by L. Brubaker and J. M. H. Smith (Cambridge, 2004).

[82] Indeed it would have improved Andrew's very thin account of Pippin's reign: Andrea Bergomatis, *Historia*, ed. by Waitz, chapter 6, p. 225; *Testi storici e poetici*, ed. by Berto, chapter 7, pp. 38–39.

[83] A point supported by the late eighth-century/early ninth-century codex from Lucca, Biblioteca Capitolare, MS Lucca 490, where a range of historical texts, including the Roman *Liber Pontificalis*, were copied in notarial hands, including at least one which copied contemporary charters: L. Schiaparelli, *Il codice 490 della Biblioteca capitolare di Lucca a la scuola scrittoria Lucchese sec. VIII–IX* (Rome, 1924); Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy*, pp. 155–61; and R. McKitterick, 'The Audience for Latin Historiography in the Early Middle Ages: Text Transmission and Manuscript Dissemination', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), pp. 96–114 (pp. 108–10). Many notaries were not, of course, more than functionally literate: T. J. Walsh, 'Spelling Lapses in Early Medieval Latin Documents and the Reconstruction of Primitive Romance Phonology', in *Latin and the Romance Languages in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by R. P. Wright (London, 1991), pp. 205–18 (p. 207).

December 870 for Bishop Garibald of Bergamo.[84] This person appears again in a document of May 881: 'Ego Andreas presbiter subscripsi.'[85] If this man was our Andrew perhaps he had some legal knowledge, as *missi* of all sorts were meant to have. Indeed in his own 'little history' he displayed exact knowledge of Lombard legal texts. If *placita* and *historiae* (and *vitae*) perhaps had a common audience, this raises another interesting issue: what may have been the relationships between similar types of narrative in different types of text? If direct speech helped to authenticate court records it may well be that spoken words made other written narratives 'authentic' too. Andrew of Bergamo allowed Lothar and Angilbert to speak to make his account of their encounter seem more lifelike and more truthful. And what about Alpcharius himself? Did he 'know' how to tell his story in court because he was part of the lay audience for history, which Rosamond McKitterick has detected for this period?[86] Count Eberhard of Friuli may not have been the only Carolingian count with a library.[87] Perhaps Alpcharius had one too? He was, after all, *comes de Alemania*, where the monks of St Gall certainly had many charters and histories in their great library.[88]

Perhaps the nature of spoken narrative in court records as outlined here should make twenty-first century historians of the early medieval period think further about using narrative to write the history of this period. There are usually so few fragments of 'evidence' to work with that any narrative that historians put

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[84] *Le pergamene degli archivi di Bergamo a. 740–1000*, ed. by M. Cortesi (Bergamo, 1988), no. 22 (an original). 'Andreas, priest and missus for the lord Bishop Garibald.' The fact that this Andreas was the Bishop's *missus* strengthens the case that this is 'Andrew of Bergamo', as Andrew was representing Bishop Garibald when he accompanied the cortege of Louis II (see above note 13). The identification of these three Andrews is discussed by Berto, *Testi storici e poetici*, p. xxii (citing an article by G. La Placa which I have not seen at the time of writing). I return to this issue in my forthcoming book *North Italian Histories*.

[85] *Le pergamene di Bergamo*, ed. by Cortesi, no. 27 (an original). 'I, Andreas the priest, subscribe.'

[86] McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 236–41, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 275, and 'Audience for Latin Historiography'; K. Heene, '*Audire, legere, vulgo*: An Attempt to Define Public Use and Comprehensibility of Carolingian Hagiography', in *Latin and the Romance Languages*, ed. by Wright, pp. 146–63.

[87] McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 245–48; C. La Rocca and L. Provero, 'The Dead and their Gifts: The Will of Eberhard, Count of Friuli, and his Wife Gisela, Daughter of Louis the Pious (863–864)', in *Rituals of Power: From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by F. Theuws and J. L. Nelson (Leiden, 2000), pp. 225–80.

[88] McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, pp. 245–48.

together must be partial and selective. Trying to 'mine' charters for 'facts' and 'events' may not be the best way to exploit them to gain insight into the nature of early medieval life. Shouldn't historians who work with Italian charters, where the 'mining' approach dominates all others, think about charters too in a more literary way? After all, as Jacques Le Goff reminded us a long time ago, the historian must not be naïve.[89]

READING ANGLO-SAXON CHARTERS:
MEMORY, RECORD, OR STORY?

Sarah Foot

I n 733 Æthelbald, King of the Mercians, granted to the church of Rochester in Kent exemption from the obligation to pay to his agents the ship-toll levied in the port of London. The charter recording this grant opens with a long proem expounding the merits of keeping written records:

> si ea quæ quisque pro recipienda a deo mercede hominibus uerbo suo largitur et donat stabilia iugiter potuissent durare superuacaneum uideretur ut litteris narrarentur ac fulcirentur, sed dum ad probanda donata ad conuincendumque uolentem donata infringere nihil prorsus robustius esse uideretur quam donationis manibus auctorum ac testium roborate non inmerito plurimi petunt, ut que eis conlata dinoscuntur paginaliter confirmentur . quorum postulationibus tanto libentius tantoque promptius consensus prebendus est quanto et illis quæ precatores sunt utilior res secundum hoc uisibile seculum nunc inpertitur, et illis qui concessores existunt pro inpertito opere pietatis uberior fructus secundum inuisibile postmodum tribuetur.[1]

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[1] S 88; *Charters of Rochester*, ed. by A. Campbell, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 1 (Oxford, 1973), no. 2; *EHD*, no. 66: 'If those things which each bestows and grants to men by his word, in order to receive a reward from God, could remain constantly stable, it would seem unnecessary that they should be recounted and strengthened in writing; but since in truth nothing would seem stronger to prove donations and to refute the man wishing to infringe donations than charters of donation strengthened by the hands of donors and witnesses, many, not without cause, seek to have the things which are known to have been conferred on them confirmed in a document; and consent ought to be granted to their demands all the more willingly and the more quickly, in that a more useful thing is conferred now in the visible world to those who are suppliants, and also a richer harvest will be given afterwards in the invisible world to those who are grantors, in return for the conferred gift of piety.'

It is common to find the benefits of keeping written records asserted in Anglo-Saxon charters:

> Nunc ut predixi heroicorum constipulaciones ne oblivioni tradantur cartulariis apicibus inserende videntur.[2]

> Omnis quidem larga munificentia regum testamento litterarum roboranda est ne posteritatis successio ignorans in malignitatis fribolum infeliciter corruat.[3]

The message in all of these is clear: memory is fallible, but a written record will provide enduring testimony, beyond the lifetime of the parties to the original transactions:

> Quicquid perpetualiter permanens a secularibus agitur, seris litterarum firmiter muniri debetur, quia hominum fragilis memoria moriendo obliuiscitur quod scriptura litterarum seruando retinet.[4]

Phrases such as these might lead us to read Anglo-Saxon charters simply as records of transactions agreed in the presence of the witnesses named, preserved in written form for the benefit of posterity. Their authors' dependence on formulaic convention — partly a signal to both contemporaries and later readers of the authenticity of the record — might further be seen as a useful mechanism for helping communities to structure a knowledge of their past.[5] But the proem with which I began (found also in a closely related charter of Æthelbald's in favour of

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[2] S 407, a charter dated AD 930 for 934 (issued at Nottingham, 7 June), by which King Æthelstan gave to the church of St Peter, York a grant of land at Amounderness in Lancashire; *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*, ed. by W. de Gray Birch, 3 vols (London, 1885–93), no. 1344; *EHD*, no. 104: 'the agreements of nobles, lest they should be given to oblivion, seem fit to be inserted with letters used in charters'.

[3] S 773, AD 969: King Edgar to Ælfwold, his faithful *minister*, a grant of land at Kineton, Warwickshire; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 1234; *EHD*, no. 113: 'Truly every generous donation of kings ought to be strengthened by the testimony of letters, lest the line of posterity falls, in ignorance, into paltry niggardliness.'

[4] S 883, AD 995: King Æthelred to Æthelwig, his *miles*; grant of land at Ardley, Oxfordshire; *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. by S. E. Kelly, 2 vols, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 8–9 (Oxford, 2000–01), II (2001), no. 125; *EHD*, no. 118: 'Whatever is transacted by men of this world to endure for ever ought to be fortified securely with ranks of letters, because the frail memory of men in dying forgets what the writing of letters preserves and retains.'

[5] I owe this suggestion to Elizabeth Tyler, who was struck by interesting connections between formulaic charters (both Anglo-Saxon and the Italian charters discussed by Ross Balzaretti elsewhere in this volume) and formulaic vernacular verse.

another Kentish house, Minster-in-Thanet[6]) hints at a different reading, suggesting that one might look at these texts not as 'a' record but as *the* record. Were these documents written not so much to preserve one version of events as an insurance against oblivion,[7] as rather to deny the possibility that any different accounts might achieve currency: 'to refute the man wishing to infringe donations'? On such a reading, the text would function not as an adjunct to recollection but as its replacement; the charter would tell one account in order that it become the accepted version, countermanding — overwriting — alternatives.

The defensive function of early medieval charters has been discussed by many commentators. In a transitionally-literate society such as that of the Anglo-Saxons,[8] where awareness of the potentiality of the written word extended beyond the Church even though possession of the technology of writing was restricted to an ecclesiastical elite, the recording of events or transactions in written form offered laymen as well as clerics mechanisms for their future transmission that would defend against neglect.[9] Writing gave fixed, verifiable, and enduring form to the information it conveyed, a permanence that was particularly useful for records concerning land ownership.[10] Provided, of course, that these were carefully preserved from theft, fire, and water, written forms protected equally against the fraudulent or malicious reversal of a donation and against the

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[6] S 86, a charter dated AD 716 or 717 (?for *c.* 733) by which Æthelbald, King of the Mercians, granted remission of toll on one ship at the port of London to the abbess of Minster in Thanet. *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury and Minster-in Thanet*, ed. by S. E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 4 (Oxford, 1995), no. 49.

[7] Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, NJ, 1983), p. 7.

[8] Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 21.

[9] For a general introduction to these issues, see Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1993), pp. 26–32; for the restriction of literacy to a clerical elite, see C. P. Wormald, 'The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and its Neighbours', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 27 (1977), 95–114 (p. 114). The particular contribution of charters to questions of literacy and its uses is explored by Susan Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society and the Written Word', in *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 36–62 (pp. 39–51); and Simon Keynes, 'Royal Government and the Written Word in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in ibid., pp. 226–57 (pp. 244–57).

[10] Franz Bäuml, 'Varieties and Consequences of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy', *Speculum*, 55 (1980), 237–65 (p. 229).

forgetfulness of the parties who had borne witness to the original arrangement.[11] The ecclesiastical environment in which such instruments were drafted was filled with reminders of the evanescence of human existence: Michael Clanchy has argued that charters and other documents as well as chronicles and histories were written as much for the needs of posterity (and indeed for the deity, to whom many were explicitly addressed) as to satisfy contemporary needs.[12] Like a monastery's relic collection, its written archive was an important element in the creation of the community's identity and had to be carefully preserved to ensure that the texts would continue to confer protection on the community's estates. A charter from the abbey of Saint-Amand in Flanders dated 1062, quoted by Laurent Morelle, articulates the necessity for committing to posterity all gifts of property by parchment and ink:

> quatinus contra seva jacula debaccantium sive linguas latrantium firmissimi sit causa obstaculi, ne quod veri christicole Deo contulerunt pro redemptione sui, insanientes pseudochristiani sinatur depredari.[13]

Yet if they were to fulfil this defensive function successfully in the future, charters had not just to look convincing but to be incontestable, to provide a testimony that could not be gainsaid.

It is scarcely surprising that early medieval religious houses took such care over the production and preservation of the muniments that witnessed to their landed possessions, nor that in periods of political instability abbeys and churches might have sought to reinforce their title to their estates by collecting such written records together, replacing any that had been lost or damaged, and conceivably 'improving' those that offered ambiguous or less than ideal testimony.[14] Cartularies (that is, manuscript collections of a copies of a church's

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[11] Pierre Chaplais, 'The Origin and Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diploma', in *Prisca Munimenta: Studies in Archival and Administrative History*, ed. by Felicity Ranger (London, 1973), pp. 28–42 (p. 31).

[12] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 146.

[13] Laurent Morelle, 'The Metamorphosis of Three Monastic Charter Collections in the Eleventh Century (Saint-Amand, Saint-Riquier, Moutier-en-Der)', in *Charters and the Use of the Written Word in Medieval Society*, ed. by Karl Heidecker (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 171–204 (p. 199): 'It is the strongest rampart against the cruel lances of madmen and their bloodthirsty cries, to keep the folly of pseudo-Christians from plundering what true Christians have given to God for their redemption.'

[14] See Martin Brett, 'Forgery at Rochester', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, vol. IV: *Diplomatische Fälschungen (II)*, MGH Schriften, 33.4 (Hannover, 1988), pp. 397–412. Also Robin

charters and privileges), whether arranged chronologically, topographically, or according to the status of the donor — papal, royal, episcopal, or lay — contributed to a house's sense of its own history just as much as more conventional historical narratives.[15] Indeed, rigid boundaries were not drawn in the early Middle Ages between 'archival' and narrative sources.[16] Compiled and presented with care, a documentary archive could tell as lucid a tale of an institution's origins and subsequent development as could a more conventional narrative account, even arguably a more convincing one. For if, as suggested above, a charter's function was at least in part to 'overwrite' any variant versions of events,[17] a sequence of such documents extending chronologically over the whole of a monastery's past told an unambiguous and seemingly incontrovertible story of that community's evolution.

The abbeys of St Albans and Westminster energetically rewrote their pre-Conquest past in the twelfth century primarily in order to obtain exemption from episcopal control, but also in defence of their ownership of particular estates. Julia Crick has recently shown the extent to which both institutions drew heavily on a written tradition; draftsmen were, she has argued, 'consciously processing a written past as much as recording unwritten tradition'.[18] In the same period, some other English abbeys, such as Abingdon in Berkshire or Ramsey

Fleming, who has examined the late eleventh-century cartulary from Christ Church Canterbury, in which a number of original pre-Conquest charters have been systematically and programmatically rewritten, reflecting the anxieties of the Kentish archiepiscopal community shortly after the Norman Conquest: 'Christ Church Canterbury's Anglo-Norman Cartulary', in *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, ed. by C. Warren Hollister (Woodbridge, 1997), pp. 83–155 (p. 86).

[15] David Walker, 'The Organization of Material in Medieval Cartularies', in *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major*, ed. by D. A. Bullough and R. L. Storey (Oxford, 1981), pp. 132–50.

[16] Marjorie Chibnall, 'Charter and Chronicle: The Use of Archive Sources by Norman Historians', in *Church and Government in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to C. R. Cheney*, ed. by C. N. L. Brooke and others (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 1–17 (pp. 1–2).

[17] Warren Brown has also considered this possibility, suggesting that dispute records could be part of the process of negotiation with opponents, that 'a carefully constructed record could even limit the effectiveness of a royal court by transforming the memory of what the court had done': 'Charters as Weapons: On the Role Played by Early Medieval Dispute Records in the Disputes They Record', *Journal of Medieval History*, 28 (2002), 227–48 (p. 231).

[18] Julia Crick, 'St Albans, Westminster and Some Twelfth-Century Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 25 (2002), 65–83 (p. 80).

and Ely in Cambridgeshire, produced texts that so fused historical account with copies of records concerning lands and rights that these have been called 'monastic cartulary-chronicles', although one could question whether this was really a discrete genre.[19] Scholars have become more sophisticated readers of medieval narrative histories in recent years, thinking more flexibly about the ways in which the memories of past deeds were preserved (and reshaped) in the Middle Ages, and about the boundaries between history and fiction.[20] Some of the many cartularies that survive from the abbey of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, while not offering a formal narrative of the history of that foundation, intersperse between copies of royal charters and writs historical passages about the succession of English kings commenting on the interest each took in the cult of St Edmund together with notes on the sequence of abbots.[21] These cartularies thus narrate the evolution and fluctuation of Bury's endowment, telling a story that is located in both an internal and a national temporal framework. The individual charter-texts, carefully copied (and recopied in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries[22])

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[19] John Hudson, 'The Abbey of Abingdon, its *Chronicle* and the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 19 (1997), 181–202 (pp. 185–86). Patrick Geary explored the question of archival memory, particularly the role of cartularies to preserve the *memoria* of monastic patrons, in his *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994), chapter 3, pp. 81–114. Warren Brown has also looked at the purpose charters and cartularies might have served, arguing that one thing all cartularies have in common is that 'each reflects a conscious or unconscious effort to select and organise information from the past for the needs of the present; each reflects an effort to select and organise information from the present for the possible needs of the future': 'Charters as Weapons', p. 230.

[20] Nancy Partner's work is of particular relevance here, both her 'Making Up Lost Time: Writing on the Writing of History', *Speculum*, 61 (1986), 90–117, and 'The New Cornificius: Medieval History and the Artifice of Words', in *Classical Rhetoric and Medieval Historiography*, ed. by Ernst Breisach (Kalamazoo, 1985), pp. 5–59. See also Gabrielle Spiegel, 'History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 59–86, repr. in her *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), pp. 3–28; and for a general discussion of the central problem, see Suzanne Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory*, 2 (1983), 278–310 (pp. 278–85).

[21] Such narratives may be found, for example, in London, British Library, Additional MS 14847, fols 27ʳ–31ᵛ, interspersed between copies of royal charters and writs, and similarly in Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff. 2. 33, fols 20ᵛ–23ᵛ, passim. These historical passages are largely different from the Bury interpolations made to the Chronicle of John of Worcester found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 297, which were printed in *Memorials of St Edmund's Abbey*, ed. by Thomas Arnold, 3 vols (London, 1890–96), I (1890), 340–56.

[22] More cartularies survive from Bury than from any other medieval English abbey, reflecting at least in part the vicissitudes suffered by the abbey, notably at the hands of the Bury

could — and still did — serve as proofs in court of the extent of Bury's posses-sions and the exceptionality of her privileges.[23] Read collectively the charters narrate one version of the house's history, different in form but not necessarily radically in intent from the histories told via the display copy of the Lives of St Edmund produced in the time of Abbot Baldwin and kept in the saint's tomb,[24] or the various texts Bury wrote in defence of her long-running dispute over the abbey's independence from the bishopric of East Anglia.[25]

Further examples could be found not only from England but from elsewhere in Western Europe to illustrate the historiographical, or indeed the liturgical considerations that governed the compilation of charter collections and the ways in which such groups of texts serve to document monastic narratives.[26] However, this essay is less concerned with reading groups of charters together as con-sciously constructed narratives than with the question of whether a single charter can be read as a discrete narrative. There is a related issue: the role of narratives embedded within charter texts. As Wolfram has argued, it has long been recog-nized 'that the whole of a charter and all of its criteria, both internal and exter-nal, can become carriers of political meaning and can contain narrative ele-ments', for example in an explanatory gloss in a dating clause.[27] Interpolated accounts will be explored in a separate section below. One way into our central

townspeople, who in one riot in 1327 got into the archive and destroyed some of the abbey's originals. See D. C. Douglas, *Feudal Documents from the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds*, Records of the Social and Economic History of England and Wales, 8 (London, 1932), p. xix.

[23] Mary D. Lobel, 'The Ecclesiastical Banleuca in England', in *Oxford Essays in Medieval History Presented to Herbert Edward Salter*, introduced by F. M. Powicke (Oxford, 1934), pp. 122–40 (pp. 128–33).

[24] London, British Library, Cotton MSS, Tiberius B II.

[25] V. H. Galbraith, 'The East Anglian See and the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds', *EHR*, 40 (1925), 222–28. The historical energies of Abbot Baldwin have been discussed by Antonia Gransden, 'Baldwin, Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, 1065–97', *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies*, 4 (1981), 65–76. Rodney M. Thomson has investigated the medieval cartularies and registers from Bury in considerable detail: *The Archives of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds,* Suffolk Records Society, 21 (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 5–40.

[26] Robin Fleming has drawn attention to the close connection between the documentary record of Christ Church Canterbury's lands and the church's liturgical commemoration of its benefactors: 'Christ Church Canterbury's Anglo-Norman Cartulary', pp. 102–06. See also Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, chapter 3; Brown, 'Charters as Weapons'.

[27] Herwig Wolfram, 'Political Theory and Narrative in Charters', *Viator*, 26 (1995), 39–51 (p. 42).

problem has been suggested by Karine Ugé, who has investigated the ways in which a usable past was created at the Flemish abbey of Saint-Bertin in the tenth century by Folcuin's *Gesta abbatum Sithiensium*. That text illustrates the abbey's history by locating copies of Saint-Bertin's charters within a historical context, but as Ugé laments 'it is actually impossible to tell if the charters are supposed to document the narrative or the narrative the documents', for 'the charters are narratives too'.[28]

Charters Are Narratives Too

It was from this perspective that I began to approach the question of reading Anglo-Saxon charters. Since the term charter can encompass a wide range of documents, it would be well to clarify at the outset which sorts of text will be explored. The argument will be confined largely to royal land grants and (so far as is possible) to texts that do not show overt signs of adaptation — augmentation or compression — by later copyists. Restricting the discussion to texts that have survived as apparent originals, on single-sheets of parchment copied in a hand seemingly contemporaneous with the purported date of the grant,[29] proved impractical;[30] but unless explicitly mentioned, it may be assumed that the charters examined below have been accepted by modern scholars as satisfying the diplomatic tests of authenticity. Important as the resolution of the issue of authenticity is, particularly for an analysis of the early medieval function and reception of texts (which could be compromised by the inclusion of sentiments voiced by post-Conquest cartularists), modern views are here far less important than are the attitudes of contemporaries: the donors and beneficiaries and their heirs, the witnesses, and those responsible for the permanent preservation of archives. In recounting the terms on which a particular piece of land, or collection of privileges, was granted, was a charter fulfilling any other function than the

[28] Karine Ugé, 'Creating a Usable Past in the Tenth Century: Folcuin's "Gesta" and the Crises at Saint-Bertin', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 37 (1996), 887–903 (pp. 891, 903).

[29] Pierre Chaplais, 'Some Early Anglo-Saxon Diplomas on Single Sheets: Originals or Copies?', in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. by Ranger, pp. 63–87 (pp. 63–65). Patrick Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence*, Jarrow Lecture, 1984 (Jarrow, 1984), pp. 3–7.

[30] While a discussion that drew only on apparent single-sheets could have argued with reasonable confidence that the views expressed within those texts were those of their original draftsmen, the vicissitudes and arbitrariness of documentary survival would have limited the analysis to a somewhat random, and possibly unrepresentative, collection of documents.

making of a record as a defence against forgetfulness — 'ne forte subsequentibus ueniant in obliuionem, et sic a iunioribus paruipendatur institutio seniorum'?[31] Did the authors of charters convey a historical attitude to the past?

The notion that the recording of human deeds in writing represented an important mechanism for saving them from oblivion was a central governing principle of classical historiography and one articulated also by medieval historians and chroniclers.[32] In form a charter looks quite different from the descriptions of donations found in saints' lives or monastic histories, but it need not have been constructed with markedly different intent, except only in the matter of verifiability. A monastic historian or hagiographer had to satisfy the literary tastes of his audience and offer an account of his abbey or saint that his peers would find plausible;[33] the draftsman of a charter needed, however, to create a text capable of standing up to the scrutiny of future legal process. Neither was necessarily constrained by an obligation to tell an unqualified 'truth', but the latter had to construct an account that could not be contested, either at the time by those who had witnessed the conveyance, or in later years when oral testimonies were forgotten.[34] In this respect the author was working within quite distinct parameters from those constraining the writing of more conventional medieval narratives. A charter draftsman had little need to entertain but every need to persuade his audience that his account was authentic. In intent, his account aimed essentially to achieve closure; his ultimate aim was the construction of a

[31] S 951, AD 1018: King Cnut to Burhwold, Bishop of Cornwall, confirmation of a grant made by King Edmund (Ironside) of land in Cornwall in exchange for an estate in Devon; *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*, ed. by J. M. Kemble, 6 vols (London, 1839–48), no. 728; *EHD*, no. 131: 'lest perchance they fall into oblivion for those succeeding and thus the dispositions of the elders be despised by their juniors'.

[32] Arnaldo Momigliano, 'Time in Ancient Historiography', in *History and the Concept of Time*, special issue, *History and Theory*, Beiheft 6 (1966), 1–23 (p. 15); Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch', *History and Theory*, 14 (1975), 314–25, repr. in her *Past as Text*, pp. 83–98 (pp. 86–87).

[33] This does not necessarily mean that we find it so; miracles were not just plausible to an early medieval audience, but were crucial in any narrative of sanctity. On the question of verifiability and plausibility in medieval histories, see further Partner, 'New Cornificius', pp. 16–17.

[34] Much has been written about medieval conceptions of truth, and this is not the place for a lengthy excursus on the subject. This reading of charter narratives differs in some respects, however, from the perspectives offered by Partner, 'New Cornificius'; Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge, 1991); and Fleischman, 'History and Fiction'.

version of events that would unquestioningly be received as 'true' by contemporaries and later readers or users of his document. Although modern historians tend to categorize documentary sources differently from narrative ones, it is profitable to explore the narrative aspect of charters further.

Narrative has since the 1980s been a profitable area for discussion among historical theorists, some of whom have turned their attention to medieval narratives, notably those found in annals and chronicles,[35] but less interest has been directed to the place of narrative within documentary sources, texts such as charters that do not outwardly present *historiae rerum gestarum*.[36] Integral to all discussion of narrative is the question of time; not simply the means by which the process of employment orders events into temporal sequence, but the question of whether time past can only be experienced through narrative.[37] As Peter Munz would have it, 'the past bears the mark of the arrow of time. Narrative is the only literary device available which will reflect the past's time structure'.[38] Narration thus becomes 'the process of making sense of the experience of time'.[39]

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[35] See, for example, Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987), particularly the first chapter, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', pp. 1–25. *History and Theory*, 26 (1987) was a special issue devoted to *The Representation of Events*; all of the papers deal with aspects of narrative; in this context, see particularly Jerzy Toploski, 'Historical Narrative: Towards a Coherent Structure', pp. 75–86. For instances of medieval historians addressing these issues, see particularly Spiegel, *Past as Text*; and Partner, 'Making Up Lost Time'. For my own reading of early medieval historical narratives, see 'Finding the Meaning of Form: Narrative in Annals and Chronicles', in *Writing Medieval History*, ed. by Nancy Partner (London, 2005), pp. 88–108.

[36] There is a substantial literature on the genesis and function of the pre-Conquest Latin charter. The first recourse for historians is Frank Merry Stenton, *Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford, 1955); the series of papers that Pierre Chaplais wrote for the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* between 1965 and 1969 are now conveniently collected in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. by Ranger, pp. 28–107. The fullest historiographical survey has been made by Nicholas Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon Charters: Recent Work', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3 (1974), 211–34, repr. with a substantial postscript in Nicholas Brooks, *Anglo-Saxon Myths* (London, 2000), pp. 181–215.

[37] Hans Kellner, 'Narrativity in History: Post-Structuralism and Since', in *The Representation of Events*, special issue, *History and Theory*, 26 (1987), 1–29 (p. 26); see also David Carr, 'Narrative and the Real World', *History and Theory*, 25 (1986), 117–31 (p. 119).

[38] Peter Munz, 'The Historical Narrative', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. by Michael Bentley (London, 1997), pp. 851–72 (p. 852).

[39] Jörn Rüsen, 'Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reason', in *The Representation of Events*, special issue, *History and Theory*, 26 (1987), 87–97. See also Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980), 169–90 (pp. 174–76).

A narrative connects seemingly unrelated events and actions and weaves them with the threads of a contextualizing plot into a story, where they are located in the course of time. The plot, Ricoeur argued, 'does not merely establish human action "in" time, it also establishes it in memory. And memory in turn repeats — re-collects — the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of the stretching along of time between a beginning and an end.'[40] Nancy Partner has shown that a story is an

> essential mode of explanation because it turns the unmeaning 'and next, and next, and next . . .' of reality into significant sequence; any series of events [. . .] which can be described in a single intelligible and significant pattern is a story, and the verbal arrangement that describes the pattern is narrative.[41]

The verbal arrangement of a charter describes the sequence of events surrounding the granting of land or privilege in a single, comprehensible pattern. That it does so in a highly formulaic fashion, with extensive borrowing and repetition from earlier land grants, does not make it to us any less a story, provided that we are satisfied it contains those elements we expect of a narrative: an opening and some form of end; a central subject (or subject matter) around which its story is told; a clear temporal location, albeit one not exclusive to a single time-frame (present, past, or future).[42] Is it anachronistic to impose our own views of narratives on such texts and argue that charters convey historical narratives? If we are to do so, we will need to explore the senses of time reflected in charters, the ideas they convey about the past, and the means by which the past should be recorded, in effect the historical sensibilities of their draftsmen.

Performance

One of the mechanisms adopted by the Church to make the validity of the written word apparent to the laity was, as Susan Kelly has suggested, the incorporation of the charter into a formal ceremony marked by the performance of

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[40] Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time', p. 183; compare also p. 180.

[41] Partner, 'Making Up Lost Time', p. 94.

[42] Rosamond McKitterick has provided a convenient summary of early medieval conceptions of time in her 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 7 (1997), 101–29 (pp. 101–10).

highly visible rituals.[43] An early West Saxon charter relating to an estate on the river Fontmell in Dorset will serve both to ground the abstractions of the preceding discussion in concrete instance and to introduce the form of the pre-Conquest land-grant to readers unfamiliar with the genre. This text is not in fact wholly without problems, but it happens to incorporate all the features of early English diplomas to which I want to draw attention.[44] The grant this charter records was made to an Abbot Bectun at some point between 670 and 676 and has survived not as a single-sheet original but rather as a copy made at later stage when the estate to which the text relates was being granted to one of Bectun's successors. The original grant, made by Coenred (father of Ine, king of the West Saxons 688–726), included more lands than the single estate at Fontmell; however, the later copyist (being interested only in the history of the estate beside this Dorset river) chose not to include the other lands in the version which he preserved. The text survives in the fourteenth-century cartulary of Shaftesbury Abbey in Dorset. The charter opens, in conventional fashion,[45] with an invocation to Christ the Saviour which is followed by a proem (introductory preamble) recommending the making of written records:

> Ea que secundum ecclesiasticam disciplinam ac sinodalia decreta salubriter definiuntur, quamuis solus sermo sufficeret, tamen pro euitanda futura temporis ambiguitatem fidelissimis scripturis documentis sunt commendanda.[46]

The dispositive clause (that is the clause in direct speech in which the grantor, speaking in the present tense and the first person, declares his gift to the recipient) marks the gift of the land by Coenred, for the relief of his soul, to the venerable Bectun.[47] As is common in early Anglo-Saxon charters, there is no formal

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[43] Kelly, 'Anglo Saxon Lay Society', pp. 43–46.

[44] S 1164; *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. by S. E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 5 (Oxford, 1996), no. 1; *EHD*, no. 55. The form and authenticity of this charter have been explored by Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', pp. 36–37; and more recently by Kelly in *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, pp. 4–9.

[45] The form of early Anglo-Saxon charters has been explained by Pierre Chaplais, 'Some Early Anglo-Saxon Diplomas'.

[46] 'Those things which are profitably defined according to ecclesiastical teaching and synodal decrees, although the word alone suffices, ought yet to be committed to most trustworthy writings and documents, to avoid uncertainty in future time.'

[47] 'Quapropter ego Coinredus, pro remedio anime mee et relaxacione piaculorum meorum, aliquam terre particulam donare decreuerim uenerabili uiro Bectune abbati, id est .xxx. manentes. De aquilone riuus nomine Funtamel.' ('Wherefore I, Coenred, for the relief of my

statement of the bounds; it was only in grants from a slightly later period that the bounds were walked out — beaten — before the granting ceremony so that the precise delineation of the estate to be given was clearly understood by all parties (and recorded in Old English to avoid all possible misunderstanding).[48] However, the southern limits of the Fontmell estate are defined in terms of their relationship to the land of Bishop Leuthere of Winchester (alive when the grant was made, but dead in 759 at the time of the confirmation of the grant and the recording of this version of the text; hence the Bishop's appellation with the tag 'of blessed memory'[49]). Further, the security and endurance of the grant were protected by the placing of sods of earth from the estate on a copy of the Gospels,[50] and via an anathema (religious sanction) threatening divine retribution:

> Si quis uero episcoporum seu regum contra hanc definicionis cartulam propria temeritate uel pocius sacrilega debacacione uenire temptauerit, inprimis iram Dei incurrat, a liminibus sancte ecclesie et seperatur, et hoc quod repetit uendicare non ualeat.[51]

The charter concludes with a list of those witnesses who subscribed to the grant, each recorded name being prefixed with the sign of the cross. The scribe reports

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soul and the remission of my sins, have decided to grant a certain small portion of land to the venerable man, Abbot Bectun, i.e. 300 hides north of the stream Fontemell by name.')

[48] Simon Keynes has stressed the importance of the vernacular boundary clause: 'Royal Government', p. 255, n. 114; see also Nicholas Brooks 'Anglo-Saxon Charters', pp. 214–15, and for a close examination of one set of bounds, see his 'The Micheldever Forgery', in his *Anglo-Saxon Myths*, pp. 239–74 (pp. 245–67). A useful comparative continental perspective is given by Patrick Geary, 'Land, Language and Memory in Europe, 700–1100', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 6th series, 9 (1999), 169–84 (pp. 176–83).

[49] 'Ex meredie habet terram beate memorie Leotheri episcopi.' ('It has on the south the land of Bishop Leuthere of blessed memory.')

[50] A further layer of religious security would guarantee a charter preserved inside a Gospel Book (either as a single sheet slipped between its leaves, or one recopied onto a blank sheet in the volume itself): Francis Wormald, 'The Sherborne Cartulary', in *Fritz Saxl 1890–1948: A Volume of Memorial Essays from his Friends in England*, ed. by D. J. Gordon (London, 1957), pp. 101–19 (pp. 106–08); Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 35; Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 156.

[51] 'If any one of the bishops or kings shall try to contravene this defining charter by his own temerity, or rather by sacrilegious fury, may he especially incur the wrath of God, and be cut off from the thresholds of Holy Church, and not be able to make good his claim to this which he demands.' Anathemas in charters have been discussed by Chaplais, 'Some Early Anglo-Saxon Diplomas', pp. 69–72. See also Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca, NY, 1993), p. 58.

that the first witness, Coenred, signed the charter with his own hand,[52] but this is scribal licence, for Anglo-Saxon attestations were not in fact autographs, although the expression *in propria manu* might imply that Coenred had touched the charter with his hand.[53]

The most significant point to stress about this text, one that will be self-evident to Anglo-Saxonists, is that this document does not itself convey this land to Abbot Bectun. The performative act, the giving of the land, happened — in front of the witnesses whose names appear at the end of the diploma — when Coenred gave the land and put the sods on the altar as proof thereof. The text is not dispositive (it does not constitute the conveyance) but represents the evidence that a conveyance has been made and does so by resorting to a different proof system from that for which the witnesses were named (viz. that of the oral testimony and sworn oaths of those who were there).[54] Had the charter never been written, the land would still have been given; even after its writing the act of giving would remain an oral act.[55] The charter is unquestionably a record of that transaction, complete without it; the use of the present tense and first person by the donor appears to recall the words spoken at the ceremony.[56] It claims, however, to be more than a record, to be an adjunct to memory when the author asserts that it was written 'to avoid uncertainty in future time'. Could we read it at another level as telling us a narrative, a historical narrative?

One of the minor confusions here is that the form of the charter seems outwardly to conform to modern conceptions of what constitutes an ordered narrative, notions that one does not often find in early medieval narratives (think for example of *Beowulf*, or the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours).[57] As we might think a narrator ought to do, the draftsman has organized his material 'into a chronologically sequential order and [focused] the content into a single coherent story, albeit with subplots'.[58] He has not presented one random thing after another, but

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[52] 'Ego Coinredus qui hanc cartulam donacionis mee per omnia in manu propria signaui et ad roborandum fidelibus testibus tradidi.'

[53] Chaplais, 'Some Early Anglo-Saxon Diplomas', p. 77.

[54] V. H. Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation Charters of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 4 (1934), 205–22 (pp. 207–08); *EHD*, pp. 375–76; Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society', p. 44.

[55] Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, p. 48.

[56] Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation Charters', pp. 208–09.

[57] Elizabeth Tyler drew this anomaly to my attention.

[58] Lawrence Stone, 'The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History', *Past and Present*, 85 (1979), 3–24 (p. 3).

recounted one thing *because* of another.[59] The plot of a charter is the giving of the land; the narrative voice is that of the donor, usually a king.[60] The beginning of the story precedes the text: it is the moment when the donor decides to make the gift, accounted for in the formulaic (but not necessarily insincere) diplomatic language as a pious act, 'pro remedio anime mee et relaxacione piaculorum meorum'.[61] The charter itself could be thought to begin with the start of time, in the fixing of the act of giving within a Christian framework through the invocation to Christ or the Trinity.[62] In the middle is the grant itself with its digressions around the bounds, or subplots dealing with the complexities of past history where these were thought necessary. The tale has an end in that the act was done before the charter was written, the witnesses 'have subscribed and consented' to the transfer being made. Yet, there is also a sense in which a charter is open-ended, legislating for the future as much as for the present and looking forward to the end of time.[63] In common with more obviously historical narratives, a charter's text does not relate to an imaginary temporal space which its author has generated. Rather the narrative that the text represents is dependent on the supposition that it relates to a past actuality.[64] In that sense it might be thought historical.

Other more obviously 'historical' texts also provide narratives about how land was granted to the Church in northern as well as southern England in the seventh and eighth centuries. Although no pre–Viking Age charters survive from

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[59] R. F. Berkhofer, *Beyond the Great Story* (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 37.

[60] Coenred was probably not a West Saxon king, but he was of royal blood; see *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. by Kelly, p. 6 and the references cited there.

[61] 'for the good of my soul and the remission of my sins'.

[62] Julia Crick has suggested to me that an invocation to Christ and the Trinity was essentially timeless, out of time, or at least out of man's time: for the end of time was always at the back of men's minds as they awaited the Last Judgement (compare Stuart Airlie's comments elsewhere in this volume on Regino's views of time). But a charter with a dating clause locates the gift firmly within the same Christian temporal framework, by enumerating the number of years that have elapsed since the Incarnation before the grant was made.

[63] The future-tensed potential of history — the notion of 'history as prophesy' — has been discussed by Karl Löwith, *The Meaning in History* (London, 1949). Compare also Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. by Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA, 1985), pp. 92–104.

[64] L. O. Mink, 'Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument', in *The Writing of History: Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. by Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison, WI, 1978), pp. 129–49 (p. 130). Compare my comments above p. 42 about the need for charter-draftsmen to construct 'true', that is incontestable, narratives.

the Northumbrian kingdom, these accounts imply that such records were made in that region too. There are two allusions to the use of written instruments recording land ownership in Stephen's Life of Bishop Wilfrid: in referring to King Alhfrith's gift of Stanford and Ripon to the saint, Stephen appears to have been quoting from a written grant;[65] in his vivid picture of Wilfrid's dedication of his church at Ripon (at some point between 671 and 678), Stephen placed written records in the Bishop's hands:

> Stans itaque sanctus Wilfrithus episcopus ante altare conuersus ad populum, coram regibus enumerans regiones, quas ante reges pro animabus suis et tunc in illa die cum consensu et subscriptione episcoporum et omnium principum illi dederunt, lucide enuntiauit necnon et ea loca sancta in diversis regionibus quae clerus Bryttannus, aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis nostrae fugiens, deseruit.[66]

In a vituperative letter Bede wrote to Bishop Ecgberht of York in 734 about the rise of false minsters in the Northumbria of his day, he spoke scornfully of those reeves and thegns who contrived to buy bookland[67] from the king,

> et haec insuper in ius sibi haereditarium regalibus edictis faciunt asscribi, ipsas quoque litteras priuilegiorum suorum quasi ueraciter Deo dignas, pontificum, abbatum, et potestatum seculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari.[68]

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[65] 'Alchfrithus dedit primum sancto Wilfritho confessori terram decem tributariorum Ætstanforda et post paululum coenobium Inhrypis cum terra XXX mansionum, pro animae suae remedio, concessit ei, et abbas ordinatus est': Stephen, *Vita Wilfrid*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid* (Cambridge, 1927; repr., 1985), chapter 8, p. 16; quoted and discussed by Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 32.

[66] Stephen, *Vita Wilfrid*, ed. and trans. by Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, chapter 1, pp. 36–37: 'Then St Wilfrid the bishop stood in front of the altar and turning to the people, in the presence of the kings, read out clearly a list of the lands which the kings, for the good of their souls, had previously, and on that very day as well, presented to him, with the agreement and over the signatures of the bishops and all the chief men, and also a list of the consecrated places in various parts which the British clergy had deserted when fleeing for the hostile sword wielded by the warriors of our own nation'; discussed, for example, by Stenton, *Latin Charters*, pp. 32–33; Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 32.

[67] Bookland was land held in perpetuity and alienable by its owner outside his or her own kin group, so termed because such grants were recorded in a charter, Old English *boc*. See Eric John, *Land Tenure in Early England* (Leicester, 1964), chapters 1–3.

[68] Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, in *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. by C. Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896), I, 405–23 (§12, p. 415); *EHD*, no. 170: 'causing the lands to be ascribed to them in hereditary right by royal edicts and even get the same documents of their privileges confirmed, as if in truth worthy of God, by the subscription of bishops, abbots and secular persons'. Patrick Wormald has discussed the implications of this passage for our understanding of bookland: *Bede and the Conversion*, pp. 19–23.

There would have been alternative ways of recording the transfer of land between individuals to the written form that the Anglo-Saxons adopted.[69] A scribe might have included serendipitous snippets about why the recipient wanted the grant, the particular circumstances that made the king willing to alienate land from his own estates, or indeed the pressures, moral or economic, that had forced him to do so.[70] Yet, because charters had a legal function, they tended to be couched in conservative and formulaic terms and were written in Latin, the language of the Church. It is striking how little the basic form of the Anglo-Saxon charter changed across the pre-Conquest period; Cnut's charters are essentially merely a more sophisticated rendering of same basic form.[71] (Cnut's reign, however, as Chaplais has argued, shows the first signs of the depreciation of the Anglo-Saxon charter as a diplomatic form, even though it is only in the reign of Edward the Confessor that the obsolescence of the charter becomes apparent in the rise in the use of the vernacular writ.[72]) The content of the Anglo-Saxon diploma is thus largely determined by its form, which was modelled on that of the late Roman land-grant.[73] The past intentions of the original grantor and his future-tensed provisions were recorded in order to ensure the undisputed inheritance of the estate after the death of the original beneficiaries and of the witnesses who could have testified to the donor's intentions. That charters had an evidentiary function is clear from the fact that they were produced in disputes as proof of present ownership;[74] recipients thus had an interest in ensuring that their documents

[69] Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity'.

[70] Compare the lengthy proems of King Æthelred's charters, which are almost homiletic in lamenting vicissitudes of time and prayerful hope that present generosity in temporal things would lead to eternal reward: for example S 882 (AD 994); S 886 (AD 995). For a discussion of the general context of these charters, see Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978–1016: A Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 186–208.

[71] Stenton, *Latin Charters*, pp. 82–84.

[72] Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 35, and 'The Anglo-Saxon Chancery: From the Diploma to the Writ', in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. by Ranger, pp. 50–61; compare Florence E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester, 1952), pp. 45–54; Keynes, 'Royal Government', pp. 246–48. For a recent discussion concerning the decline of the diploma in the eleventh century, see Charles Insley, 'Where Did All the Charters Go? Anglo-Saxon Charters and the New Politics of the Eleventh Century', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 24 (2001), 109–27 (pp. 120–26).

[73] Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 33; Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion*, pp. 11–17.

[74] For examples, see Patrick Wormald, 'Charters, Law and the Settlement of Disputes in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 149–68.

conformed as much to the prescribed forms as possible. This was a genre in which linguistic conservatism and authorial effacement were signs of authenticity; imaginative flights of scribal fancy, unnecessary circumlocutions, the choice of florid vocabulary, or the importation of neologisms are all potential marks of the forged or improved text, at least before the mid-tenth century. Some charters do offer incidental pieces of information, frequently in the form of narrative asides with a temporal dimension.[75] For example, the dating clause of a grant of some estates in Gloucestershire made by Burgred, King of Mercia (?852–873/4), to Ealhhun, Bishop of Worcester, reported that the year in which the grant was made, 855, was 'quando fuerunt pagani in Wreocensetun'.[76] Wærferth, Bishop of Worcester 869x872–907x915, justified his leasing of an estate at Nuthurst in Warwickshire on the grounds that he badly needed the 'acceptable money' (twenty mancuses of tested gold) that the beneficiary was paying, 'pro sua amicitia . et placabili pecunia . xx . mancusa auri [. . .] pro inmenso tributo barbarorum . eodem anno quo pagani sedebant in Lundonia'.[77] But such non-essential additions are not common.

Time

Although Anglo-Saxon charters were thus designed to conform as much as possible to a formulaic template, we might reasonably ask whether charters provide anything more than the application of a set of prescribed formulae to the circumstances of an individual grant, manufactured in order to provide proof within

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[75] Wolfram has also commented on examples of charters whose dating clauses include narratives: 'Political Theory', p. 42.

[76] S 206, AD 855: Burgred, King of Mercia, to Ealhhun, Bishop, and his *familia* at Worcester: a grant of privileges in return for payment; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 487; *EHD*, no. 90: 'when the pagans [*pagani*] were in the province of the Wrekin dwellers'. A similar sort of aside is found in a charter of the same year in which King Æthelwulf of Wessex said that he had completed 'this donation and privilege in 855, the third indiction, that is when by the grant of divine grace I proceeded across the sea to Rome': S 315; *Charters of Rochester*, ed. by Campbell, no. 23; *EHD*, no. 89. Compare also the reference to the day of his consecration as king made by Ceolwulf I of Mercia in a grant to Archbishop Wulfred, dated 17 September 822: S 186; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 370; *EHD*, no. 83.

[77] S 1278, AD 872; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 534; *EHD*, no. 94: 'because of the very pressing affliction and immense tribute of barbarians in the same year when they stayed in London'.

written form recognizable in law. There may be a case for perceiving such documents as highly artificial confections, albeit creations confected within tight formulaic norms.[78] Their authors reveal a developed sense of temporality, where past, present, and future operate simultaneously within a single text. Gabrielle Spiegel, talking about medieval chronicles, has argued that the act of writing history is in fact a means of preserving the reality of time; history, she argues, creates a 'time-space' that saves the things of the moment and establishes their relation to what has happened and what will happen.[79] Charters also can be read in this fashion. Although diplomas are temporally situated in the present, at the moment of giving, they refer back to the past; the finished text implies understanding of the enacted conveyance that preceded it. Charters often mark changes in the ownership of land, but not invariably so, for writing can also be used to renew grants and privileges given in earlier generations.[80] A charter was not always treated as fixed and stable, either, particularly not one that related to the gradual foundation and endowment of a religious house; when that process had extended over many years it could only with difficulty be recorded as an act of donation, made in the present tense.[81] No act of forgery was necessarily involved in the recrafting of a pancarte, a composite text amalgamating a series of donations into one document, whatever its chronological confusions.[82]

That the text of a charter refers back to a previous performance does not always seem clear within the temporal framework of the document. Donors frequently, although not invariably,[83] are made to state their intention to give in the present tense — 'trado', 'concedo', 'dono', 'concedimus et confirmamus' — as if the disposition is made 'now' by the granting of the charter. The grant is further located firmly in the moment by the formal dating clause; the day of month is often stated and the giving is located within the context of the linear time elapsed since the Incarnation. Other dating methods are also employed;

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[78] Insley has explored the pedagogic and ideological function of the language and formulation of Anglo-Saxon charters, exploring the artifice in their construction: 'Where Did All the Charters Go?', pp. 113–18.

[79] Spiegel, *Past as Text*, p. 95.

[80] Discussed most interestingly in Barbara H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property* (Ithaca, NY, 1989).

[81] Galbraith, 'Monastic Foundation Charters', pp. 208–10.

[82] Chibnall, 'Charter and Chronicle', p. 11.

[83] Pierre Chaplais, 'Who Introduced Charters into England? The Case for Augustine', in *Prisca Munimenta*, ed. by Ranger, pp. 88–107 (p. 104).

some charters locate the gift in relation to the length of a king's rule; many refer further to one or more cyclical, repeated time-frames. To take just one example, a grant made by Uhtred, sub-king of the Hwicce, to a certain Æthelmund ends with a complex dating clause:

> Conscripta est [autem hæc donatio anno ab] incarnatione domini nostri Jhesu Christi . dcc . lxx . Indictione viiii . decenovi . xi . Lun' . viii.[84]

Here one might note that statements about the drawing up of a charter were conventionally couched in the past tense.[85] The temporal rule of kings and the time of their royal line is set more securely in the context of divine, eternal time in the anathema looking forward to the future:[86]

> Si quis uero hoc decretum irritum facere [t]err[an]ico [fre]tus [potentu] uiolenter [tempt]agerit nouerit se tremendo cunctorum examine coram Christo rationem redditurum et habere partem cum Iuda traditorem Domini nostri in inferno inferiore.[87]

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[84] S 59, AD 770: Uhtred, *regulus* of the Hwicce, to Æthelmund, his faithful *minister*, grant for three lives of five hides at Aston in Stoke Prior, Worcestershire, with reversion to the church of Worcester; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 203; *EHD*, no. 74: 'this donation was drawn up in the year of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ 770, the ninth indiction, the eleventh decenoval, the eighth of the lunar cycle'.

[85] Consider, for example, the complete sentence concluding the text of S 206, from which the allusion to the pagans was quoted above: 'Gesta est autem huius libertatis donatum . anno dominice incarnationis . dccc . lv ° . indictione . iii ª . in loco qui vocatur Oswaldesdun . quando fuerunt pagani in Wreocensetun' ('And the donation of this privilege was done in the year of our Lord's incarnation 855, the third indiction, in the place which is called *Oswaldesdun*, when the pagans were in the province of the Wrekin dwellers').

[86] The defensive function of the anathema has been discussed by Little, *Benedictine Maledictions*, p. 53. Compare also Robin Fleming's comments about the enthusiasm of the Christ Church cartulist for the threat of liturgical malediction as a means of protecting the community's landed endowment: 'Christ Church Canterbury's Anglo-Norman Cartulary', pp. 102–03. The contrast between early medieval English documents, which threatened only divine sanction after the perpetrator's death, and continental ones, which imposed financial penalties for infringement, has been explored by Chaplais, 'Some Early Anglo-Saxon Diplomas', pp. 71–72.

[87] S 1184, AD 780: Oslac, *dux* of the South Saxons, to the church of St Paul, grant of land in Sussex; *Charters of Selsey*, ed. by S. E. Kelly, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 6 (Oxford, 1998), no. 11; *EHD*, no. 76: 'if anyone indeed shall try, relying on tyrannical power, violently to make void this decree, he is to know that he must render account in the presence of Christ at the terrible Judgment of all men, and have his part with Judas the betrayer of our lord in lower hell'.

Embedded Narratives

One further way in which the authors of charters reveal their conceptions of time may be found in those diplomas in which specific reference is made in the text to past events which occurred before the occasion on which the grant was given (or the recorded judgement was made). Such embedded narratives, often reporting the previous history of an estate, are found particularly in texts recording the settlement of disputes, when opposing parties made their case, through the production of written charters and sworn testimony of witnesses, at royal councils (meetings of the king and his leading secular and ecclesiastical nobles).[88] One example explored in some detail may serve to illustrate the wider argument: a charter of King Edward Elder (899–924), written in 901, relating to an estate at Wylye in Wiltshire.[89] The text opens with a proem recommending the value of the written word as a recourse against 'the assault of misty oblivion'.[90] The proem is followed by a straightforward disposition: 'quia Eadweard Angul Saxonum Dei gratia annuente rex aliquam agelli partem proprii iuris donans in perpetuam possessionem iure hereditario . Æðelwlfo . concedo.'[91] That land, ten hides, is then defined and its appurtenances listed. The charter continues, still speaking in the King's voice, 'in omnibus prefatam conscribimus terram . preter arcis munitionem . et pontis constructionem . et expeditionem'.[92] But instead of going straight on to the bounds and the anathema, the author has then embedded a separate narrative, reporting in the third person how the land had been forfeited by Wulfhere, because he had broken his oath to the King; it was the judgement of Mercians and West Saxons that he should lose his lands, and that his documents (recording his own ownership of the estate) ought thereafter to

[88] For example, the cases discussed by Patrick Wormald in his 'Charters, Law and the Settlement of Disputes'.

[89] S 362, AD 901: King Edward to Æthelwulf, grant of ten hides by the river Wylye (i.e. Stockton, Wiltshire), with a note, in English, of the agreement of Æthelwulf and Deormod, granting this land to Deorswith; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 595; *EHD*, no. 100. The case is listed in Patrick Wormald, 'A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Lawsuits', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), no. 27.

[90] 'quo minus ingruente caligosa obliuione origo ueritatis cassaretur'.

[91] '[I], Edward, by the gift of God's grace king of the Anglo-Saxons, give and concede to Æthelwulf a certain portion of land of my own rightful ownership into his perpetual possession.'

[92] 'We write the aforesaid land to him, indeed, free in all things except the fortification of fortresses and the construction of bridges and military service.'

be proscribed and rendered invalid. The bounds and anathema are next duly provided, but there follows a second digression, this time written not in Latin but in Old English. The paragraph ('this writing', *Ðis gewrit*) makes known a marriage agreement made between Æthelwulf and a certain Deormod. As part of this agreement Æthelwulf gave the land at Wylye to a woman, Deorswith; she is presumably Æthelmund's wife, and either sister or daughter to Deormod. Deorswith's future claim to this estate was ensured by the fact that Æthelwulf gave her the title-deeds '7 ageaf hire þa bæc ðy ilcan deg ðe hi man him geaf . on dissa manna gewitnesse'.[93] The inclusion of the marriage agreement is unproblematic: it confirms that on the same day that Æthelwulf received the land from the King he passed it on to his wife, whose future claim would be reinforced by her possession of the text of the charter. More interesting is the question as to why the narrative about Wulfhere's derelictions should have been included. Could it be that it was thought necessary that these details be explained and the judgement against Wulfhere be recorded in order to prevent his future telling of an alternative narrative, one that left him unjustly deprived, or which would have left it open to him to use his own charters to mount a claim for restitution of this estate?

The most discursive surviving pre-Conquest charters are those from the reign of Æthelred 'the Unready', where one frequently finds all sorts of accounts of present events, including narratives of an estate's past history embedded within them, especially in the period when the maturing King was trying to undo the ill-advised decisions he had made in the period of his youthful indiscretions.[94] The single example I have chosen here offers one of the liveliest narratives. Dated 995, it recounts a story of the theft of a bridle which led to a fight between three brothers and their loss of their lands.[95] The text has attracted a good deal of attention, not least for the incidental detail it supplies that the right to a Christian

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[93] 'on the same day on which they were given to him, in the witness of these men'.

[94] A framework for the reign of King Æthelred was devised by Simon Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*, chapter 4; the period of 'youthful indiscretions', 984–*c*. 993, is analysed pp. 176–86. The group of charters from Æthelred's reign that provide instances of the forfeiture of land to the King as a result of criminal activity have been studied by Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment in the Reign of King Æthelred', in *People and Places in Northern Europe: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, ed. by Ian Wood and Niels Lund (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 67–81 (pp. 76–81).

[95] S 883 (see above, note 4); *EHD*, no. 118. The background to this charter has been discussed by Simon Keynes, 'Crime and Punishment', pp. 79–80.

burial would be forfeit by lawbreakers. But it could be argued that the telling of this story serves a similar purpose to that proposed for the grant of Edward the Elder. The anathema to the 995 charter is couched in the strongest of terms,[96] after which the King is made to declare: 'Hoc autem precipiens precipio ut nulla aliorum librorum scedula nostro libello precelli uideatur, sed in perpetuum delitescat et aboleatur.'[97] Plural narratives could be — perhaps already had been — told of this brawl and its aftermath; the reeve who had elected to bury the malefactors had been reported to the King for his misconduct. One way to read this charter-text is to see it as having been written in order to privilege this version of the multiple possible accounts of the quarrel. Perhaps that act of recording the narrative in writing gave it a potential status superior to that of any other circulating oral versions. If so, this may in part reflect contemporary attitudes to the power, even the mystique, of the written word, a sense that writing gave a legitimacy and authority to a narrative beyond that of an oral utterance.[98] Reading the charter in this fashion makes this *the* record of what occurred (and of the final disposition of the land), not one record among many.

The same could be argued of my final example, a grant made by Cnut to the New Minster in Winchester, restoring to the monks land in Hampshire that he had wrongly given away.[99]

> Hanc quippe terram quidam prefat*e* ciuitatis inhabitator adolescens animosus et instabilis calliditate et mendacio sibi a me adquisiuit . dicens terram meam fuisse .

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[96] 'Si quis uero cupiditatis zelo inflatus hunc mee donationis libellum destruere temptauerit, sit anathema maranatha, hoc est alienatio a consortio Christianorum, nisi resipuerit et quod callide facere temptauerit penitens penituerit.' ('If, truly, anyone, swollen with the lust of cupidity, shall attempt to destroy this my charter of donation, let him be anathema, maranatha [I Corinthians 16. 22] — that is, let him suffer alienation from the fellowship of Christians — unless he come to his senses and, repenting, does penance for what he tried to do fraudulently.')

[97] 'This, however, I strongly enjoin, that no document of other title-deeds may seem to be superior to our charter, such is to lie hidden for ever and be destroyed.'

[98] It is relevant to consider here Bäuml's discussion of how a narrative from oral tradition which assumes a written form changes its public: 'Varieties and Consequences', p. 244. For a Latin text was self-evidently directed in the first instance at an audience of *litterati*, those who could read and understand Latin, even if members of that audience could convey the substance of the message to those unable to read (or comprehend it) in its written form.

[99] S 956, AD 1019: King Cnut to the New Minster, Winchester, restoration of five hides at Drayton, Hampshire; *Liber Monasterii de Hyda: A Chronicle and Chartulary of Hyde Abbey, Winchester, 455–1023*, ed. by E. Edwards (London, 1866), pp. 324–26; *EHD*, no. 132.

meque facile eam sibimet tradere posse . quod et feci . At ubi ueritatem agnoui . hereditatem Dei dignis heredibus ocius restitui feci . et ad testimonium et confirmationem hoc in presenti cartula manifestari precepi.[100]

I should like to suggest that charters that incorporate embedded narratives do so in order to reconcile discord and prevent future dispute; charters without such narratives may represent records of grants of land that had not previously been alienated, or grants which were not contested. These texts legislate for the future by recounting the past in such a way as to legitimize and make necessary the present act of giving. The telling of the narrative is essential precisely because it is not the only one available; its record in writing (whether in a single copy, or in duplicate or even triplicate parts held by the separate parties[101]) elevates its status above that of oral report. The whole text is designed to be incontestable, but it recognizes the evidential weight of other — contrary — documents and seeks to render them invalid in the process. The temporal summation of what has gone before is part of what makes the text powerful.

Many charters claimed, as we have seen, to have been written for a largely mnemonic purpose, in order to assist in the future recollection of transactions effected (and thereby made valid) by word of mouth.[102] Charters purport to be, and look like, bland records: accounts of the transfer of land or privileges, written statements of the separate elements performed in conveying an estate,

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[100] 'This land indeed a certain inhabitant of Winchester, young, daring and inconstant, acquired for himself from me with cunning and lying, saying that the land was mine and that I could easily give it to him, which I also did. But when I realized the truth I caused the inheritance of God rather to be restored to worthy heirs, and ordered this to be manifested for testimony and confirmation in the present charter. And since we have discovered that there are in the possession of the aforementioned youth letters contrary to this privilege, and acquired by fraudulent investigation, we both condemn those under pain of anathema and hold as worthless any other such if there are any anywhere; and we endow only this writing with perpetual liberty and confirm it.'

[101] Susan Kelly has explained the making of chirographs (duplicate, triplicate, or even quadruplicate) copies of the text of an agreement made on one sheet of parchment, each copy separated by the word CYROGRAPHUM (or variant spelling thereof). The sheet was then cut through the word *cyrographum* and the separate pieces given for safe-keeping by the different parties involved: 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society', pp. 49–50.

[102] As I noted in my 'Remembering, Forgetting and Inventing: Attitudes to the Past in England at the End of the First Viking Age', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 9 (1999), 185–201 (p. 186), an observation I might now modulate on the basis of the argument advanced here.

including the beating of the bounds or the placing of sods on an altar,[103] made with the consent of those witnesses whose names are appended to the text. They thus seem to represent a stage in Michael Clanchy's path from memory to written record. Yet no one would claim that written diplomas are emasculated creatures, neutered and objective; they convey to posterity a deliberately created and rigorously selected version of events, like any other historical text.[104] The writing about past events, the recording of previous transactions, serves neither to bolster reminiscence nor to help memory: it moves beyond recollection. It tries, in fact, to do just what memory cannot. These texts, despite their assertions to the contrary, were not written because '[n]am quod hominis memoria transsilit litterarum indago reseruat',[105] nor were they recorded in order to avoid uncertainty at a future time. They were designed instead to ensure that of all the plural memories and recollections available, only this one story was, and could be, told. Charters were not written down in case memory should fail, but rather to prevent the wrong memory from triumphing. The conventional statements made at the start of charters about the superior probative value of written grants over oral statements should perhaps not be dismissed as 'banal'[106] but taken rather more seriously as declarations of the superiority of the message conveyed within the text that is to follow. As the proem of a charter of King Offa of Mercia (757–96), issued at Chelsea in 785, declared, records should be made because of the uncertain passage of future time, 'quoniam sæpe ex ignorantia sive etiam ex inprobitate contingit ut denegatio rerum vere gestarum nascatur'.[107] Charters

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[103] On the placing of sods on an altar as part of the ceremony of donation, see Wormald, 'Sherborne Cartulary', p. 106, n. 2; and Kelly, 'Anglo-Saxon Lay Society', p. 44. The role of charters as quasi-liturgical documents has also been discussed by Charles Insley, 'Where Did All the Charters Go?', pp. 119–20.

[104] Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, p. 147.

[105] S 886, AD 995: King Æthelred to Wulfric his *minister*; grant of land at Dumbleton, Gloucestershire, forfeited by Æthelsige for theft, granted by the King to Hawas, his man, and now exchanged by Hawas for other land belonging to Wulfric; *Codex Diplomaticus*, ed. by Kemble, no. 692; *EHD*, no. 119: 'what the memory of man lets slip the circumscription in letters preserves'.

[106] Chaplais, 'Origin and Authenticity', p. 33.

[107] S 123, AD 785: Offa, King of Mercia, to Ealdbeorht, *minister*, and Selethryth, his sister, grant of land at Ickham and Palmstead, Kent, with woodland in the Weald and other appurtenances; *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ed. by Birch, no. 247; quoted by Stock, *Implications of Literacy*, p. 48: 'since out of ignorance or even deceit it often happens that a denial of what truly took place arises'.

thus witness to a developed, even sophisticated view of the past and of the purpose of historical writing, their draftsmen voicing the historical mentality that was fundamental to the intellectual formation of literate Anglo-Saxons (brought up on the Bible and other *Historiae*) and to perceptions of English identity.[108]

Memory has proved a fruitful and fashionable subject for historians in recent years,[109] but from the point of view of this argument a valuable insight can be found in a historian from an earlier (much less fashionable) generation, Herbert Butterfield. In a lecture he gave to the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London in 1961, Butterfield drew a tight distinction between personal memories and 'history'. Memories he saw as

> a past without shape or structure, simply a rag-bag of old stories. [. . .] Even when stories were told about battles 'long ago' or the record of an event was copied from one piece of parchment to another piece of parchment, we are far from what I should call a structuralised knowledge of the past, far from the thing we mean by the historical mentality.[110]

Yet, I have tried to show that Anglo-Saxon charters do show something of that mentality, they do reflect a structuralized knowledge of the past, even while copying a record of a past event from one piece of parchment to another.[111] The texts of charters create a time-space located in relation both to past and future.[112] One way to read them would be as historical narratives.

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[108] For a recent discussion of Anglo-Saxon literacy and specifically the role of biblical and Christian texts in its development, see Ursula Schaefer, '*Ceteris Imparibus*: Orality/Literacy and the Establishment of Anglo-Saxon Literate Culture', in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal, Studies in Medieval Culture, 40 (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp. 287–311 (pp. 292–96). On the role of Christian history in shaping Anglo-Saxon identities, see Patrick Wormald, 'The Venerable Bede and the "Church of the English"', in *The English Religious Tradition and the Genius of Anglicanism*, ed. by Geoffrey Rowell (Wantage, 1992), pp. 13–32; and my 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity Before the Norman Conquest', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 6 (1996), 25–49.

[109] For example, James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992); Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1990); Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*; Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Basingstoke, 1999).

[110] H. Butterfield, *History and Man's Attitude to the Past, their Role in the Story of Civilisation* (London, 1961), p. 6.

[111] Perhaps the charter-draftsman's dependence on formulae and conventions helped him to create a 'structuralised knowledge' of that past.

[112] Spiegel, *Past as Text*, p. 95.

If we are to do so, it might be more helpful to think of history not, as it so frequently is, as representing a stage of progress beyond memory, rather as the antithesis of memory.[113] In this light, we would do better to read charters not as neutral, factual records (telling us 'how it actually was'), but as stories constructed deliberately and carefully in order to supersede recollection.[114]

[113] Gabrielle Spiegel offered me this perceptive insight after hearing an earlier version of my 'Remembering, Forgetting, and Inventing'.

[114] This essay has been immeasurably improved as a result of the critical and perceptive comments made by Julia Crick and Michael Bentley as well as the helpful advice of the editors. None is responsible for such errors and infelicities as remain.

William of Malmesbury's Use of Charters

Julia Barrow

I n his historical writings William of Malmesbury frequently cites, both as extracts and as full-length texts, documentary materials across a wide range. Poems, letters, decrees of church councils, and above all charters are brought into his work.[1] If we exclude poems, the *Gesta Regum* and *Gesta Pontificum* (henceforward *GR* and *GP*)[2] between them contain quotations from or full texts of just over a hundred documents, fifty-one in *GR* and sixty-three in *GP*, with some overlap between the two; these texts are listed in appendices at the end of this essay to let the reader see the scale of the phenomenon.[3] In short, William quotes a large number of documents in order to build up his narratives of English royal history and of the English dioceses. The quotation of texts, even

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[1] The *De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie*, which is not dealt with in this essay because of the problems posed by later interpolations, but which needs to be mentioned here, contains twelve charters quoted in full (some of them also used by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum*): John Scott, *The Early History of Glastonbury: An Edition, Translation and Study of William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastonie Ecclesie* (Woodbridge, 1981), pp. 54–59, 92–95, 98–103, 104–05, 108–09, 110–11, 122–27, 128–29, 132–33, 154–55, 162–65; and numerous brief extracts from or references to charters, pp. 88–93, 104–05, 128–31.

[2] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom, 2 vols (Oxford, 1998–99); William of Malmesbury, *De gestis pontificum Anglorum libri quinque*, ed. by N. E. S. A. Hamilton, Rolls Series, 52 (London, 1870). A new edition of William's *GP* is forthcoming by Rodney Thomson and Michael Winterbottom in the Oxford Medieval Texts series.

[3] See Appendices 1 and 2 below for complete lists of documents in *GR* and *GP*. For verse quotations, see *GR*, I, 66, 94, 120, 192, 210–12, 220–22, 346–48, 384, 484, 514–18, 586, 612–14, 784–87, 786, 789; and *GP*, pp. 154, 180, 187, 192–93, 197, 220, 299, 313, 336, 343–45, 382, 384, 397–98, 407, 427, 432–33.

though it interrupts the flow of historical narrative, nonetheless supports the latter by authenticating what is being said. However, a significant point to bear in mind when considering William's use of cited documents to create and support his narratives is the fact that many of these charters and the papal letters have for long been known to be suspect, which raises the questions of whether William knew that he was using inauthentic material, whether he was using it deliberately, and, if so, what his intentions were in so doing.

Curiously, the issue of William's use of spurious texts never seems to have been dealt with globally and comprehensively, but separate areas of forgery and embellishment have been noted by many scholars. For example, R. M. Thomson, in examining William's use of Alcuin's epistles, has pointed out that William was quite happy to alter the wording, omit phrases, alter names, and even stitch passages from different letters together when he wished to.[4] Paul Fouracre, in his discussion of William's version of Boniface's Letter to Æthelbald of Mercia, has attributed the material hostile to Charles Martel, not found in other versions of this letter, to William.[5] Michael Lapidge showed that William refused to use genuine tenth-century poems about Athelstan and carefully replaced them with poems written in his own day following the norms of the Loire school.[6] The many scholars who have worked on the Canterbury forgeries have noted William's extensive use of these texts, based on Eadmer.[7] Scholars working on Anglo-Saxon charters for Malmesbury and Glastonbury have noted William's frequent citation of forgeries.[8]

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[4] Rodney Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 165–71.

[5] Paul Fouracre, *The Age of Charles Martel* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 135–36.

[6] Michael Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 9 (1981), 61–98, repr. in *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066*, ed. by Michael Lapidge (London, 1993), pp. 49–86 (pp. 49–59).

[7] On the Canterbury forgeries, see Heinrich Boehmer, *Die Fälschungen Erzbischofs Lanfranks von Canterbury*, Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche, 8 (Leipzig, 1902); C. N. L. Brooke, 'The Canterbury Forgeries and their Author', *Downside Review*, 68 (1950), 462–76, and 69 (1951), 210–81; R. W. Southern, 'The Canterbury Forgeries', *EHR*, 73 (1958), 193–226; Margaret Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 231–37; Susan Elisabeth Kelly, 'Some Forgeries in the Archive of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, vol. IV: *Diplomatische Fälschungen (II)*, MGH Schriften, 33.4 (Hannover, 1988), pp. 347–69.

[8] Anton Scharer, *Die angelsächsische Königsurkunde im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 1982), pp. 24, n. 6, 93, n. 47, 148–50; Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, pp. 31–32; Heather Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, BAR, British Series, 198 (Oxford, 1988), pp. 6–7, 80–81; N. Berry, 'St Aldhelm, William of Malmesbury and the Liberty of Malmesbury Abbey',

This essay, however, is devoted to the theme of narrative and not to the identification of forgeries or to diplomatic analysis. Nevertheless, the issue of forgery is important in the context of this essay for two reasons. First, forged charters often contain narratives — more often, proportionately, than genuine charters do. For a historian like William, who enjoyed inserting fictional stories as digressions into his main historical narratives,[9] and who was also keen to quote charters to build up the main line of narrative, they were particularly attractive. Secondly, we need to know how aware William was that some of the material he was using was spurious, and we can do this by taking note of the way in which he introduces quoted texts, including spuria, into his narratives. How conscious would William have been of the issue of authenticity? As a Benedictine monk in twelfth-century England he would have been well aware of the necessity of producing legally acceptable charters in law courts, and it is difficult to imagine that he was ignorant of the large-scale forgery committed by major Benedictine houses in twelfth-century England, forgery which the black monks were better equipped to create than any of their contemporaries because of their access to archives and their knowledge of history.[10] Among the best-equipped houses were Christ Church Canterbury and the abbeys of Glastonbury and Malmesbury, the three churches whose archives William quotes from extensively.[11] The quantity

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Reading Medieval Studies, 16 (1990), 15–38; David Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 41n., 163n., 176n.; Lesley Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge, 1996), pp. 21–24.

[9] Monika Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill, 1996), pp. 98–99, 109; in general, on the occurrence of fictionality and referentiality in the works of English twelfth-century historians, see Otter, *Inventiones*, pp. 1–19, and D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 21.

[10] For the link between English Benedictines and forgery, see Helen Clover, 'Alexander II's Letter *Accepimus a quibusdam* and its Relationship to the Canterbury Forgeries', in *La Normandie bénédictine au temps de Guillaume le Conquérant*, ed. by G.-U. Langé (Lille, 1967), pp. 417–42; Julia Barrow, 'How the Twelfth-Century Monks of Worcester Perceived their Past', in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. by Paul Magdalino (London, 1992), pp. 53–74 (p. 73); for the role of the Benedictines in writing history in England in the earlier twelfth century, see R. W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 4: The Sense of the Past', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 23 (1973), 243–63 (pp. 247–56).

[11] William's use of archival material is selective: the only churches whose charters he cites, wholly or in part, are Christ Church Canterbury, Glastonbury, and Malmesbury. He had

of forged material cited by William is eye-catching: at a rough count, about half of the papal documents[12] and no fewer than sixteen of the Anglo-Saxon charters[13] in *GP* and *GR* are forged or interpolated, and, as far as the Anglo-Saxon charters are concerned, the earliest witness is always a manuscript of either *GP* or *GR*. *GP* and *GR* are the only witnesses for S 436, and *GP* alone is the only witness for S 1166.[14] It is hard to conceive that William, with his highly skilled rhetorical training, which must have included learning how to write different sorts of letter and charter, could not have been aware that he was quoting at least some forged material, and it is not impossible that he drafted some of the items himself. The links between the writing of history and the forging of charters were close in twelfth-century English Benedictine communities, forgers making use of historical detail to make their charters more plausible.[15]

We now need to glance quickly at William's output and method of writing as a historian. For his *Gesta Regum* he adopted a fairly flexible genre (*gesta* are sequences of stories, not necessarily with much of a connecting thread),[16] which did not impose a strict framework on his material. He was in fact able to create his own framework, adopting from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (hereafter Bede, *HE*) the idea of having five books, which William devoted to the following periods: Anglo-Saxon history before Egbert of Wessex; Anglo-Saxon history from

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access to the archives of St Frideswide's in Oxford but did not quote their charters verbatim, and it is also noticeable that he cites no charter material from Worcester Cathedral (itself deeply involved in forgery in the twelfth century), although he spent much time there and made use of its historical materials, especially Coleman's *Life of Wulfstan* which he translated into Latin: *William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives*, ed. by M. Winterbottom and R. M. Thomson, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 2002), pp. 1–155.

[12] See *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78), III (1878), 65, 73–74, 85–86, 116–17, 229–31, 250, 311–12; *Councils and Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, I: 871–1204*, ed. by D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. N. L. Brooke, 2 vols (Oxford, 1981), I, 35–38 (interpolated), 88–92 (interpolated), 173–74 (interpolated); *Papsturkunden 896–1046*, ed. by H. Zimmermann, 2 vols (Vienna, 1984–85), I (1984), 271–74, 414–16, 595–97.

[13] For the forged Anglo-Saxon charters in *GR* and *GP*, see the lists in Appendices 1 and 2.

[14] For S 436, see notes 42–43 below.

[15] Compare Marjorie Chibnall, 'Forgery in Narrative Charters', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, IV, 331–46; Julia Barrow, 'The Chronology of Forgery Production at Worcester from c.1000 to the Early Twelfth Century', in *St Wulfstan and his World*, ed. by Julia Barrow and Nicholas Brooks, Studies in Early Medieval Britain, 4 (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 105–22.

[16] For *Gesta* as genre, see Michel Sot, *Gesta episcoporum, gesta abbatum* (Turnhout, 1981).

the time of Egbert to Hastings (including the unification of England as a king-
dom, which William dated to the early ninth century); William the Conqueror;
William Rufus; and Henry I.[17] The *Gesta Pontificum*, which belongs to the genre
of *gesta episcoporum* or diocesan histories, is a daring attempt to compile a sort
of Union Catalogue of histories for all English dioceses; indeed, William went
further and included several monasteries as well, notably Malmesbury, which
received its own special book at the end.[18] Like the *GR*, the *GP* is also in five
books, mirroring Bede, *HE*, and it also mirrors that work in its choice of topic,
in a manner very reminiscent of the penultimate chapter of Bede, *HE*, v. 23, in
which Bede provides the reader with a *tour d'horizon* of all the English dioceses
existing in his day. *GP* is, effectively, an update of Bede, *HE*, v. 23.[19] Behind *GR*
and *GP* lay a wide range of models (William's reading was enormously exten-
sive), chiefly, obviously, Bede, *HE*, and *Historia Abbatum* and, to a lesser extent,
Paul the Deacon's Roman and Lombard histories.[20] Bede and Paul provided
possible structural frameworks; Bede, moreover, must have been formative in
William's interest in topography, buildings, and, above all, citation of docu-
ments. Bede's own use of document citation is lavish and, like William's, in-
cludes verses, letters, and a set of church council decrees.[21] Indeed the only type
of text not quoted by Bede in his historical writings is the charter, a curious
omission given the importance of royal grants to Northumbrian monasteries.[22]

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[17] *GR*, I, xxxi–xxxii ('Plan of the *GR*'); II, 12–14, 74–75, 218–19, 267–68, 354–55.

[18] *GP*, pp. 5–139 (Bk I: Canterbury), 147–207 (Bk II: bishops of the East Saxons, the East
Angles, and of Wessex), 208–76 (Bk III: York and Durham), 277–329 (Bk IV: the Mercian
dioceses, Worcester, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, and Ely), 330–443 (Bk V: Aldhelm and
Malmesbury Abbey).

[19] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors,
Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969) (hereafter Bede, *HE*), pp. 556–60 (v. 23).

[20] Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, pp. 39–40, 44 (William's debt to Bede), and 66–68
(William's debt to Paul the Deacon). For recent work on Paul the Deacon, see Rosamond
McKitterick, 'Paul the Deacon and the Franks', *Early Medieval Europe*, 8 (1999), 319–39 and
literature there cited.

[21] Bede, *HE*, Bk IV, ch. 5, pp. 348–52, for the set of synodal decrees; for the range of verses
and letters cited in Bk I, see Bede, *HE*, ch. 7, p. 28 (line of Venantius Fortunatus); ch. 10, p. 38
(verses of Prosper); chs 13–14, 17–19, 30–32, pp. 46, 70–72, 78–102, 104–14 (letters of
Gregory I).

[22] For Bede's comments on royal grants to monasteries, see his *Letter to Ecgbert*: *Venerabilis
Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. by Charles Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1896), I, 414–15; for trans-
lation, see Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People; The Greater Chronicle; Bede's*

Bede cites material for a variety of reasons, sometimes to display his education, but more often to establish his authority for the points he is making and also for didactic and moral purposes.

Important as Bede and Paul were to William, there is nonetheless a quality in William and central to his being which is almost wholly lacking in Bede and which, though present in Paul, is less noticeable in him than in William. This is a taste for humour, often in the form of savage satire. Bede does on occasion make dry little academic jokes, but laughing was clearly not one of his priorities. He comments on how the Anglo-Saxon kings all claim to descend from Woden, he slightly spitefully comments on how Irish manuscript fragments could be used to make a cure for snakebite, and in his prose Life of Cuthbert he even daringly surprises the reader expecting the usual *puer senex* topos by suggesting that Cuthbert as a child actually liked playing games with other children, but that is more or less the limit of Bede's sense of fun: cruel humour does not feature in his writings.[23] Paul shows more humour than Bede, but much less than William. He is more likely to strike a mystical or a sinister note.[24] Nor can William's satire derive wholly from classical models, even though he quotes Juvenal and Persius, because it operates mostly in a specifically Christian setting. Curiously the medieval authors who come closest to William in tone are Gregory of Tours and Liudprand in his *Antapodosis*. William of Malmesbury does not actually seem to have read Liudprand's writings or Gregory of Tours's *Ten Books of the Histories*,[25]

Letter to Egbert, ed. by Judith McClure and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1994), pp. 350–51; for comment, see Patrick Wormald, *Bede and the Conversion of England: The Charter Evidence* (Jarrow, 1984), p. 20.

[23] Bede, *HE*, Bk I, ch. 1, p. 20 (cure for snakebite) and Bk I, ch. 15, p. 50 (descent from Woden); *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. by Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 154–56 (*Prose Life of St Cuthbert*, ch. 1).

[24] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX (Hannover, 1878), Bk I, ch. 15, p. 55, mystical river-crossing; and Bk I, ch. 27, p. 69, Alboin's use of Cunimund's skull as a drinking cup. For comment on Paul's use of mystical and sinister elements, see Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 382–94.

[25] It would have been next to impossible for William to obtain Liudprand's *Antapodosis*, for in the twelfth century the work was probably available only in the Empire: cf. *Liudprandi Cremonensis Opera Omnia*, ed. by Paolo Chiesa, CCCM, 156 (Turnhout, 1998), pp. xix–xxxi. Access to Gregory's *Ten Books of the Histories* would have been easier: there were copies at St-

but he did use Gregory's *De gloria martyrum* and *De gloria confessorum*, works which, as D. R. Shanzer has shown, make as explicit a use of satire as the *Ten Books of the Histories*.[26] William inhabited exactly the same thought-world as Gregory of Tours and, even though he probably did not read him, Liudprand. All three authors share a taste for crudity: defecation, sexual intercourse, and brutal and irrational acts of violence. Paul the Deacon is interested in all these too, but does not exploit their humorous value as much as the other three do. Another feature shared by William, Gregory, Paul, and Liudprand is their enjoyment of a favourite satirical device, playing up crimes and failings in female characters to attack not the latter but the men with whom they were associated.[27] It is a world far removed from Bede.

Some examples might help to show William's interest in crudity: first, his adaptation of a story about the infant Constantine V Copronymos to cast discredit on Æthelred the Unready:

> Anno Dominicae incarnationis nongentesimo septuagesimo nono Egelredus filius Edgari et Elfridae regnum adeptus obsedit potius quam rexit annis triginta septem. [. . .] Ignaviam eius predixerat Dunstanus, fedo exemplo ammonitus: nam cum pusiolus in fonte baptismi mergeretur, circumstantibus episcopis alui profluuio sacramenta interpolavit, qua re ille turbatus 'Per Deum' inquit 'et Matrem eius, ignauus homo erit!'[28]

Omer and Bec in his lifetime: on the other hand, if William had used Gregory's *Ten Books*, he would surely have given the Merovingians at least a walk-on appearance in the *GR*, for William shows a strong interest in Frankish (though exclusively Carolingian) history in that work: Rodney Thomson, 'William of Malmesbury's Carolingian Sources', *Journal of Medieval History*, 7 (1981), 321–38.

[26] Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p. 203, for William's knowledge of Gregory's miracle stories; Danuta Shanzer, 'Literature and the Literary in Gregory of Tours' Hagiography', unpublished paper, International Medieval Congress, Leeds, July 2001, on Gregory's use of satire in his miracle stories; Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 112–234, for Gregory's use of satire in the *Ten Books of the Histories*.

[27] For an example of this technique used by William, see note 30 below.

[28] *GR*, I, 268 (Aethelred baptism). 'In the year of our Lord 979 [for 978] Æthelred, son of Edgar and Ælfthryth, came to the throne, and occupied (rather than ruled) the kingdom, for thirty-seven years [. . .]. His worthlessness had already been foretold by Dunstan, warned by a filthy token of it: when as a baby he was being plunged in the font at his christening with the bishops standing around, he interrupted the sacrament by opening his bowels, at which Dunstan was much concerned — "By God and His Mother," he said, "he will be a wastrel when he is a man."' The story is one originally told about the Byzantine emperor Constantine V Copronymos (AD 741–75): Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. by C. de Boor, 2 vols (Leipzig,

William also adapted a story about the misbehaviour of one of Charlemagne's daughters[29] to show the sister of the Emperor Henry III (1039–56), and thus Henry III himself, in a bad light:

> Sororem sanctimonialem unice diligebat, ut suo eam lateri deesse non pateretur, sed semper triclinium eius suo coniungeret. Dum igitur quadam hieme, quae nivibus et pruinis aspera inhorruerat, uno diu loco detineretur, clericus quidam curialis, familiarior iusto puellae effectus, crebro nocturnas in cubiculo eius protelabat vigilias. [. . .] Sed cum quadam nocte cupitis fruerentur amplexibus, et diutius se uoluptas protenderet, illuxit mane, et ecce omnem terram nix operuerat. Tum clericus, qui se deprehendendum per vestigia in niue timeret, pesuadet amicae ut dorso eius impositus angustias illas euaderet. Illa, non refutans impudentiam dum modo uitaret uerecundiam, leuat tergo amasium et extra curiam effert. Et forte tum imperator minctum surrexerat, et per fenestram cenaculi despiciens uidit clericum equitantem.[30]

1883–85), I (1883), 400, Anno Mundi 6211; cf. *GR*, II, 146. There are similarities to a story told by Gregory of Tours (*Ten Books of the Histories*, Bk II, ch. 2) about a young Spanish woman, forced to accept Arian baptism on the orders of a Vandal king, polluting the font with menstrual blood, though here the moral aspect of the pollution has been inverted and is virtuous: Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X*, ed. by Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 1.1 (Hannover, 1951), p. 40; for a translation, see Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. by L. Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 107; for comment on Gregory's attacks on Arianism, see Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 213–19.

[29] This story, preserved at the monastery of Lorsch, where it was copied into the Codex Traditionum Laureshamensium in the later twelfth century (*Chronicon Laureshamense*, ed. by G. H. Waitz, MGH Scriptores, 21 (Hannover, 1869), pp. 358–59) is apparently based on the liaison between Charlemagne's daughter Bertha and her lover Angilbert, but was adapted to have as its central figures Imma (who for the purposes of the story becomes a daughter of Charlemagne) and Einhard: *GR*, II, 183–84; see also Robert Folz, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiéval* (Paris, 1950), pp. 342–43, and Paul Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (Lincoln, NE, 1994), pp. 13–14.

[30] *GR*, I, 340–42. '[Henry] was much devoted to his sister, who was a nun, so much so that he never allowed her to leave his side, and had her sleep in the chamber next his own. One winter of heavy snow and bitter frost, he was detained for a long time in one place, and a certain clerk belonging to the court, who became more intimate with the lady than he should have been, often spent long nightly vigils in her room. [. . .] One night they were enjoying each other's embraces, and prolonged their pleasures until daybreak, when lo and behold the ground was all covered with snow. So the clerk, afraid that his footprints would give him away, persuaded his lady to let him escape from this tight spot by riding on her back. The princess accepted this shameless proposal, rather than be put to shame herself, lifted her lover on her shoulders, and carried him out of the royal precinct. It so happened that at that moment the emperor had risen to relieve himself, and looking out of the closet window he saw the clerk on his mount.'

The original motif in William's story is Vergil's picture of the pious Aeneas carrying his father away from Troy, but piggy-back rides have undergone a sea-change in between. In addition to the sexual connotations of being ridden there may also be a hint of the fact that the carrying of certain objects (saddles, for example, or hounds) could be used as a punishment in Germany and France in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries.[31]

It is worth considering these examples because they show the type of history which William was trying to write and provide a literary context into which his use of charters can be placed. William quite often punctuated his main line of narrative with digressions intended to amuse the reader, and also, by heaping ridicule on bad behaviour, to encourage morality. His use of charters could be as satirical as his telling of dirty stories about Æthelred the Unready or about Henry III. I disagree with Rodney Thomson when he writes:

> [William] could not, of course, distinguish the false from the genuine documents, and this led him into error; but even modern researchers have found the same task difficult, and William is nearly unique at this time in realising that these documents might be used, even if his *modus operandi* was not sufficiently refined to ensure the most accurate of conclusions.[32]

On the contrary, I suspect that William, in quoting the charters he has selected, is deliberately pulling his reader's leg. Nonetheless, important though humour was in his choice, it was far from being the main reason for his use of charters. The main reason was to provide additional detail to back up his narrative,

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[31] On the act of carrying animals or objects as a ritual form of punishment, see Bernd Schwenk, 'Das Hundetragen: ein Rechtsbrauch im Mittelalter', *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 110 (1990), 289–308; Karl Leyser, 'Ritual, Ceremony and Gesture: Ottonian Germany', in Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries*, ed. by Timothy Reuter (London, 1994), pp. 189–213 (p. 197); and Jessica Hemming, '*Sellam gestare*: Saddle-Bearing Punishments and the Case of Rhiannon', *Viator*, 28 (1997), 45–64. A less dishonourable form of piggy-back ride makes an appearance in the story about Conrad III and the loyal women of Weinsberg in 1140 (Conrad allowed the female inhabitants of the castle, which he was besieging, to leave with whatever they could carry on their backs, so they carried their husbands out with them): Robert Holtzmann, 'Die Weiber von Weinsberg: Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Kritik der Paderborner Annalen', *Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte*, n.s., 20 (1911), 413–72; Robert Holtzmann, 'Die treuen Weiber von Weinsberg: Zwei Kritiken', *Historische Vierteljahrschrift*, 18 (1916–18), 1–32; Karl Weller, 'Die neuere Forschung von den treuen Weinsberger Weibern', *Zeitschrift für württembergische Landesgeschichte*, 4 (1940), 1–17.

[32] Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p. 17.

particularly dates to provide a clear chronology. Additionally, William appreciated charters which themselves contained narratives.

Before turning to discuss the narrative value of charters to William, however, I wish to examine their humorous value, which he underlines for the reader by the way in which he introduces them into his historical works. William has a range of techniques for introducing texts. Sometimes he adopts a factual, Bedan approach,[33] but often his satirical vein breaks through and he chooses his prefatory words to suggest to the reader that things may not be quite as they seem. Here is William introducing the splendid fake in which Pope Sergius requests Abbot Ceolfrith to send Bede to Rome:

> Quid quod ferunt eum Romam iuisse, ut libros suos uel aecclesiasticae doctrinae convenire presens assereret uel, si resultarent, apostolico nutu corriperet? Veruntamen quod Romae fuerit solide non affirmo, sed eum illuc inuitatum haud dubie pronuntio; quod haec epistola clarum fatiet, simul et quanti penderit eum Romana sedes, ut eum tantopere desideraret.[34]

Or William might hint more explicitly at the idea of forgery. The lead-in to Leuthere's charter for Malmesbury reads, 'De qua re, ut omnem sermo noster dubietatis deprecetur offensam, uerba eius hic aliqua intexam'.[35] Or William might hint at the idea of a jest. The introduction to the *Narrative of Plegmund* in which Archbishop Plegmund supposedly sets out some instructions from Pope Formosus reads: 'quid [. . .] de renovandis episcopatibus a papa Formoso preceptum sit iocundum puto memoratu; itaque uerbis eisdem quibus inueni scripta interseram'.[36] The operative word here is 'pleasant' (*iocundum*). Similarly with

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[33] Bede varies the precise wording of his prefatory remarks to avoid repetition, but nevertheless is always straightforward, as the following examples show (Bede, *HE*, pp. 104, 110, 348, 396): 'Quarum litterarum iste est textus' (i. 29); 'Exemplar autem prefatae epistulae hoc est' (i. 32); 'Cuius synodicae actionis huiusmodi textus est' (iv. 5); 'Videtur oportunum huic historiae etiam hymnum virginitatis inserere' (iv. 20).

[34] *GR*, I, 86–87. 'Men even say that he [Bede] went to Rome, to maintain in person that his writings agreed with the doctrine of the Church, or correct them by papal authority if they diverged. That he actually was in Rome I do not affirm for certain; that he was invited thither I maintain beyond cavil, as the following letter will show, which indicates also how highly he was esteemed by the Holy See, that his presence should be so greatly desired.'

[35] *GR*, I, 44–45. 'And, to relieve my remarks of any imputation of unreliability, I will incorporate here some words of his on this subject.'

[36] *GR*, I, 202–05. 'The instructions issued [. . .] by Pope Formosus for the renewal of episcopal sees will, I think, make pleasant reading, and I shall therefore insert them here in the words of my source.'

Edgar's privilege for Glastonbury: 'Priuilegium sane quod eidem aecclesiae contulit huic nostrae historiae, sicut in eorum antiqua scedula legi, non est absurdum inserere.'[37] *GP* is much less rich in teasing references of this type, but nonetheless has two obvious examples. After including a painfully long dossier of Canterbury material (mostly, of course, Canterbury forgeries) into Book One of *GP*, William breaks off to say: 'Haec sacra privilegia [. . .]. Hic quoque inserta, si lectorum poterunt evitare nausiam, non incommodum locum obtinebunt.'[38] And here is William commenting on Sergius's privilege for Aldhelm:

> Quod hic ex integro apponam, ut omnem ambiguitatis evadat scrupulum, quantis sint maledictionibus obnoxii [. . .] qui nunc id impune se opinantur temerare et transgredi.[39]

Clearly *caveat lector* is the watchword here: we need to look out for references to jokes, absurdities, doubts, and qualms in the prefatory remarks to cited documents, and if they are present we need to take note of them. Here we can see William entering into a contractual arrangement, a sort of complicity, with his readers (or at least with those of his readers who are watchful), which can be viewed as one of the distinguishing marks of fictionality.[40] Comparison of William's and Bede's methods of introducing quotations underlines this point: Bede is straightforward; William is double-edged.

As for William's use of the content of charters, his exploitation of charters to provide dates and names has been commented on by several scholars,[41] so we

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[37] *GR*, I, 242–43. 'Indeed it is not absurd to insert the privilege which he granted to that church into this our history, just as I read it in an antique document.'

[38] *GP*, p. 62. 'Inserted here, these sacred privileges, if they can avoid arousing nausea in my readers, will find a suitable place for themselves.'

[39] *GP*, p. 367. 'Which I shall insert here in full, so that it may escape all shadow of doubt with what great curses are those liable to punishment [. . .] who now think they may violate and transgress it with impunity.'

[40] Otter, *Inventiones*, pp. 7–9; Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance*, p. 13.

[41] For Stubbs's comments on William's use of documents (chiefly letters), see William of Malmesbury, *De gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque. Historiae novellae libri tres*, ed. by William Stubbs, Rolls Series, 90, 2 vols (London, 1887–89), I (1887), pp. ix–x, xxi; II (1889), pp. xxvi–xxviii, xxix, xl, xliv–xlv, lv–lx, lxi, cvii; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), pp. 177–78, remarks that William used charters 'to authenticate his account' and points out that many of them were forged or interpolated; Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p. 17; Scott, *Early History of Glastonbury*, pp. 18–19, shows how William made use of charters to provide dates for individuals otherwise hard to date, such as Bishop Leuthere, and above all to establish sequences of the Abbots of Malmesbury (*GP*, Bk V), and of the Abbots of Glastonbury (*De antiquitate*).

may instead concentrate on two of the charters cited by William which themselves contain narratives. Firstly here is Athelstan making a grant to Malmesbury:

> Sciant sapientes regionis nostrae nos has prefatas terras non iniuste rapuisse, rapinamque Deo dedisse; sed sic eas accepi quemadmodum iudicaverunt omnes optimates regni Anglorum, insuper et apostolicus papa Romanae aecclesiae Iohannes, Elfredo defuncto, qui nostrae felicitati et uitae emulus extitit nequitiae inimicorum nostrorum consentiens, quando me uoluerunt patre meo defuncto cecare in ciuitate Wintonia, si non me Deus sua pietate eripuisset. Sed denudatis eorum machinamentis, missus est ad Romanam aecclesiam, ut ibi se coram apostolico Iohanne iureiurando defenderet. Et hoc fecit coram sancti Petri altari; sed facto iuramento cecidit coram altari, et manibus famulorum suorum portatus est ad Scolam Anglorum, et ibi tertia nocte uitam finiuit. Et tunc Apostolicus ad nos remisit, et quid de eo ageretur a nobis consuluit, an cum ceteris Christianis corpus illius poneretur. His peractis et nobis renuntiatis, optimates nostrae regionis cum propinquorum illius turma efflagitabant omni humilitate ut corpus illius per nostram licentiam cum corporibus poneretur Christianorum; nosque illorum efflagitationi consentientes Romam remisimus, et consentiente papa positus est ad ceteros Christianos, quanuis indignus. Et sic iudicata est michi tota possessio eius in magnis et modicis. Sed et haec apicibus litterarum prenotauimus, ne quam diu Christianitas regnat aboleatur unde michi prefata possessio, quam Deo et sancto Petro dedi, donatur; nec iustius noui quam Deo et sancto Petro hanc possessionem dare, qui emulum meum in conspectu omnium cadere fecerunt, et michi prosperitatem regni largiti sunt.[42]

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[42] *GR*, I, 222–25 (excerpt from S 436 only); *GP*, p. 402 (full text of S 436 in *GP*, pp. 401–03). 'Be it known to the wise men of our country that the lands aforesaid were not seized by us unjustly and offered to God as the spoils of robbery, but I received them in accordance with the judgement of all the nobles of the English kingdom and of Pope John on the death of Alfred, who was always jealous of my prosperity and of my life and was party to the wickedness of my enemies when they tried after my father's death to blind me in the city of Winchester, though God in his mercy preserved me. So, when their evil designs were laid bare, he was sent to the Church of Rome, to defend himself there on oath in the presence of Pope John. And this he did at the altar of St Peter, but having sworn the oath, he fell down before the altar and was carried by his servants into the *Schola anglorum*, where two nights later he died. Then the pope sent to us, and asked us what should be done with him and whether his body should be given Christian burial. So when this had happened and had been reported to us, the nobles of our country together with a crowd of his kinsmen most humbly urged that with our permission his body might be given Christian burial, and we granted their request and replied to Rome accordingly, and with the pope's consent he was given Christian burial, little as he deserved it. Thus it was that all his possessions both great and small were adjudged to me. All this I have set down in writing that so long as Christianity endures it may not be forgotten how it came about that the possessions aforesaid, which I have given to God and St Peter, were made over to me. And I know no more just course of action than to give them to God and St Peter, who caused my enemy's downfall in the sight of all men and have given me a prosperous reign.'

Patrick Wormald[43] argues that this charter (certainly forged) may perhaps preserve a tradition of a conspiracy in Athelstan's reign and of his punishment of the conspirators, for clause 26 of II Athelstan (the Grately code) denies Christian burial to those swearing false oaths, unless their diocesan bishop can state that they have performed penance. But, for William's purposes, this charter fulfils a number of desired aims: it shows off, as he himself remarks, Athelstan's 'sapientia et pietas [. . .] in Dei rebus' ('wisdom and his devotion towards God'), presumably because the King is modifying the harshness of clause 26 of the Grately code by showing forgiveness; moreover, the charter provides a thrilling horror story about sudden death of the kind favoured by Gregory of Tours and Paul the Deacon, with an appropriate touch of saintly vengeance, and, finally, as William also points out, it illustrates a point that he makes elsewhere (on the basis of a charter issued by Alfred)[44] that the principal church at Malmesbury was dedicated to St Peter up to the time of King Edgar, when a new church was built dedicated to St Mary.

The other charter I should like to look at for narrative is a privilege which Edgar is supposed to have made for Malmesbury:

> Ego Edgarus [. . .] quid imperii mei potissimum Regi regum Domino darem, tanti memor honoris sollertius sepe tractaui. Piae igitur fautrix deuotionis peruigili meae studiositati superna subito insinuauit pietas quaeque in regno meo sancta restaurare monasteria, quae uelut musciuis scindulis cariosisque tabulis tignotenus uisibiliter diruta, sic (quod maius est) intus a seruitio Dei ferme uacua fuerant neglecta. Idiotis nempe clericis eiectis, nullus regularis religionis disciplinae subiectis, plurimis in locis sanctioris seriei, scilicet monachici habitus, prefeci pastores, ad ruinosa quaeque templorum redintegranda opulentos eis fiscalium munerum exhibens sumptus.[45]

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[43] Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, vol. I, *Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 307–08.

[44] *GP*, pp. 394–95, citing S 356.

[45] *GR*, I, 248–51; *GP*, p. 404. 'I Edgar [. . .] have often considered with care what portions of my realm I could for preference give to our Lord the King of kings in memory of this great honour. So it was that my pious devotion was fostered by the divine Goodness, which suddenly suggested to my wakeful mind as I brooded on this question, that I should restore all those holy monasteries in my kingdom which had suffered neglect equally as they fell into ruin for all to see, with moss-grown shingles and rotten boarding worn down to the framework and which likewise (which is a more serious matter) were, within, almost empty of God's service. Having thus cast out the idiotic clerks, subject to the discipline of no regular religion, I have appointed in many places shepherds of a holier lineage, that is to say of the monastic habit, providing them with generous expenses of fiscal wealth to rebuild the ruined parts of their temples.' The translation supplied here is based on Mynors but with some alterations.

This charter shows much less invention on the part of its author, who is quoting, partly verbatim, the writings of Æthelwold on the subject of the tenth-century monastic reform. The symbolic depiction of decay is very Æthelwoldian, though it can also be found in other writings about the tenth-century monastic reform, notably the *Life of John of Gorze*.[46] For William, the need surely must have been to fit Malmesbury into the scheme of monastic reform under Edgar and to show it taking its place among the newly reformed Benedictine abbeys.

To conclude, I want to go back to the quotation I took from Rodney Thomson earlier and explore some of its implications a little further. Thomson said, 'He could not, of course, distinguish the false from the genuine documents'.[47] First I want to disagree with this: I hope I have been able to show that William could pick out at least some of the forgeries and that he made his ability to discriminate clear to the reader. Secondly, I want to look at the assumptions underlying the words 'of course'. They are intended to mean, surely, that a historian as learned and talented as William could not possibly have wished to be involved in creating or in knowingly copying a forgery, because forgeries are immoral and untruthful and historians are supposed to be truthful. Now let us look at a historian who took a more disapproving stance. Georg Waitz in his comments about William in the tenth volume of MGH Scriptores said, 'Et sane negari nequit multa apud Malmesburiensem legi quae a vera historia longe recedant, eaque maxime in illa libri parte qua aliena regna tetigit.'[48] Waitz had some justification for this viewpoint: William's consistent sniping at anything German makes his *GR* read at times like a *Sun* editorial. No wonder Waitz felt

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[46] *Councils and Synods I*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, I, 119–54, nos 31–33, for texts by or associated with Æthelwold making use of 'filth' and 'decay' terms (Edgar's New Minster charter, the proem to *Regularis Concordia*, and the account of Edgar's establishment of monasteries); for figurative use of the terminology of decay by the reformers at Gorze, see Patrick Wormald, 'Aethelwold and his Continental Counterparts: Contact, Comparison, Contrast', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. by Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 13–42 (p. 28); and John Nightingale, 'Beyond the Narrative Sources: Gorze's Charters 934–1000 AD', in *L'abbaye de Gorze au Xᵉ siècle*, ed. by Michel Parisse and Otto Gerhard Oexle (Nancy, 1993), pp. 91–104 (p. 95).

[47] Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, p. 17.

[48] MGH Scriptores, 10, ed. by G. H. Pertz (Hannover, 1852), p. 450. 'And indeed it cannot be denied that many things are to be read in the *Malmesburienser* which depart a long way from true history, and those things the most in that part of the book in which he touched on other kingdoms' (my translation). Waitz's critique is quoted at length by R. M. Thomson in *GR*, II, 180.

little sympathy for William's approach to the writing of history. However, if we begin from the assumption that William's main aim in writing history was not being objective, but rather being creative and entertaining, then we have a way of explaining why his treatment of sources can be, from a scholar's point of view, subversive. Moreover, in thinking about charters, we need to remember that there was a noticeable legal difference between a charter existing in an unauthenticated form (a draft or a cartulary copy, for example) and one existing in an authenticated form. The former would be perfectly acceptable as a stylistic exercise — perhaps schoolboy monks had to compose them as part of their education in the *ars dictaminis* — so why should William not simply carry on developing this skill in his adult life and use it to embellish his historical writings? Nor was he being wholly untruthful, for lurking in his texts, if we look out for the giveaway adjectives, are little clues which will help the reader to arrive at the *discrimen veri ac falsi*.

Appendix 1

Documents quoted by William of Malmesbury in his Gesta Regum

(Passages in *GR* are cited by volume and page and then by book and section number).

Quotations from Alcuin's letters:
Epistolae Karolini Aevi, ed. by Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epistolae, 4 (Berlin, 1895)
1   *GR*, I, 134 (i/91): Alcuin to Colcu, 790 (Dümmler, no. 7, extract)
2   *GR*, I, 106 (i/72): Alcuin to Joseph, 790 (Dümmler, no. 8, extract)
3   *GR*, I, 104 (i/70): Alcuin to Æthelred, King of Northumbria, 793 (Dümmler, no. 16, extract; also in *GP*, p. 209)
4   *GR*, I, 104 (i/70): Alcuin to Æthelheard, Archbishop of Canterbury, 793 (Dümmler, no. 17, extract)
5   *GR*, I, 102 (i/70): Alcuin to the monks of Wearmouth/Jarrow, 793 (Dümmler, no. 19, extracts)
6   *GR*, I, 102 (i/70): Alcuin to the clergy of York Minster, 795 (Dümmler, no. 43, extract)
7   *GR*, I, 136 (i/93): Charlemagne to Offa, King of Mercia, 796 (Dümmler, no. 100, extract)
8   *GR*, I, 104, 106 (i/70, 72): Alcuin to Offa, King of Mercia, 796 (Dümmler, no. 101, extracts)
9   *GR*, I, 96 (i/65): Alcuin to Eanbald II, Archbishop of York, 796 (Dümmler, no. 114, extracts; also in *GP*, p. 246)
10   *GR*, I, 96 (i/65): Alcuin to Charlemagne, 796x797 (Dümmler, no. 121, extracts; also in *GP*, p. 246)
11   *GR*, I, 104 (i/70): Alcuin to Osbert, 797 (Dümmler, no. 122, extracts)
12   *GR*, I, 118 (i/82): Alcuin to Æthelheard, Archbishop of Canterbury, 801 (Dümmler, no. 230, referred to, but not quoted; also in *GP*, p. 17)
13   *GR*, I, 124 (i/87): Alcuin to Æthelheard, Archbishop of Canterbury, 802 (Dümmler, no. 255, extract; also in *GP*, p. 18)

Quotations from Boniface's letters:
Die Briefe der heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus, ed. by Michael Tangl, MGH Epistolae Selectae, 1 (Berlin, 1916)
1   *GR*, I, 114–18 (i/80–81): Boniface to Æthelbald, King of Mercia, 746x747 (Tangl, no. 73, extracts)
2   *GR*, I, 118 (i/82): Boniface to Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, 747 (Tangl, no. 78, referred to, but not quoted)

Miscellaneous letters:

1   *GR*, I, 124–28 (i/88): Letter of Cenwulf, King of Mercia, to Pope Leo, 798
    (*Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*,
    ed. by A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78), III (1878), 521)
2   *GR*, I, 204 (ii/129): Narrative of Plegmund (*Councils and Synods with Other
    Documents Relating to the English Church, I: 871–1204*, ed. by D. Whitelock,
    M. Brett, and C. N. L. Brooke, 2 vols (Oxford, 1981), I, 167–69)
3   *GR*, I, 820–22 (App. 138B): Letter of Radbod, Prior of St Samson's, Dol, to
    Athelstan, King of England (*Councils and Synods I*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett,
    and Brooke, I, 38–40; also in *GP*, pp. 399–400)
4   *GR*, I, 324–28 (ii/183): Cnut's Second Letter to the English (*Councils and
    Synods I*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, I, 506–13)
5   *GR*, I, 534 (iii/299): Profession of obedience of Thomas, Archbishop of York,
    to Lanfranc (*Canterbury Professions*, ed. by M. Richter, Canterbury and York
    Society, 68 (Torquay, 1973), no. 34; *English Episcopal Acta*, vol. V: *York
    1070–1154*, ed. by J. Burton (Oxford, 1988), no. 1; also in *GP*, p. 42)

Charter of an anonymous Dumnonian king:

1   *GR*, I, 812 (App. 27BC): brief excerpt from the witness list of a charter of an
    unnamed King of Dumnonia

Charters issued by Anglo-Saxon kings:

1   *GR*, I, 120 (i/83): Æthelbald of Mercia, privilege for churches, 749 (S 92); on
    the church council where the charter was issued, see *GP*, pp. 9–11
2   *GR*, I, 814–18 (App 36C): Ine, 725 (S 250)
3   *GR*, I, 818–20 (App 39C): Cuthred of Wessex, 745 (S 257)
4   *GR*, I, 172–74 (ii/114): Æthelwulf of Wessex, 844, part only (S 322)
5   *GR*, I, 222–24 (ii/137): Athelstan, 937, part only (S 436; also in *GP*, pp.
    401–03)
6   *GR*, I, 231 (ii/143): Edmund, 944 (S 499)
7   *GR*, I, 244–46 (ii/150C): Edgar, 971 (S 783)
8   *GR*, I, 248–50 (ii/153): Edgar, 974 (S 796; also in *GP*, pp. 404–05)
9   *GR*, I, 330–32 (ii/185): Cnut, 1032 (S 966)

Charters issued in the Anglo-Saxon period by people other than kings:

1   *GR*, I, 44 (i/30): Leuthere, Bishop of Wessex (S 1245; also in *GP*, pp. 334 and
    347−49)

Charters issued by post-Conquest kings:

Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066–1154, ed. by H. W. C. Davis and others, 4 vols (Oxford, 1913–69).

1   *GR*, I, 830 (v/398.4): Henry I (*Regesta*, II, no. 784)
2   *GR*, I, 830 (v/398.4): Henry I (*Regesta*, II, no. 1485)

Papal Letters:

Philipp Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 2nd edn under the auspices of Wilhelm Wattenbach by Samuel Loewenfeld, Ferdinand Kaltenbrunner, and Paul Ewald, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1885–88); cited below as JE and JL according to convention.

1   *GR*, I, 528 (iii/295): Pope Gregory I to Augustine, 601: 'Cum certum sit' (JE 1829; *EH*, pp. 104–07 (i. 29); *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78), III (1878), 29–30)

2   *GR*, I, 528 (iii/296): Pope Boniface V to Archbishop Justus, 625: 'Susceptis vestrae dilectionis' (JE 2007; *Councils*, ed. by Haddan and Stubbs, III, 74; also in *GP*, pp. 47–49)

3   *GR*, I, 88 (i/58): Sergius I to Abbot Ceolfrith: 'Quibus verbis' (JE 2138; *Councils*, ed. by Haddan and Stubbs, III, 248–50)

4   *GR*, I, 130–32 (i/89): Pope Leo III to Cenwulf: 'Veniens ad' (JE 2511; *Councils*, ed. by Haddan and Stubbs, III, 538)

5   *GR*, I, 826–28 (App. 150B): John XIII, supposedly confirmed by 'sacro scripto' of Edgar of 965: 'Noverit cunctorum' (JL 3751)

6   *GR*, I, 246–48 (ii/151C): John XIII: 'Relatione quorundam' (JL 3752)

7   *GR*, I, 276–79 (ii/166): John XV, 991: 'Noverint omnes' (JL 3840)

8   *GR*, I, 528–30 (iii/297): Alexander II to William I, October 1071: 'Omnipotenti Deo' (JL 4695; *The Letters of Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. by Helen Clover and Margaret Gibson (Oxford, 1979), pp. 60–63)

9   *GR*, I, 750 (v/415): Paschal II to Anselm, extracts, 1102: 'Suavissimas dilectionis' (JL 5928)

10 *GR*, I, 746–50 (v/414): Paschal II to Henry V, 1103: 'In literis' (JL 5956)

11 *GR*, I, 752 (v/416): Paschal II to Anselm, 1106: 'Quod Anglici' (JL 6073)

12 *GR*, I, 768–70 (v/424): Paschal II, privilege for Henry V, 1111: 'Regnum vestrum' (JL 6290)

13 *GR*, I, 774–76 (v/431): Gelasius II, 1118: 'Quia vos Romanae' (JL 6635)

14 *GR*, I, 776–78 (v/433): Calixtus II, 1121 : 'Quia dereliquit' (JL 6902)

15 *GR*, I, 780 (v/436): Calixtus II, 1122: 'Ego Calixtus' (JL 6986)

Church councils, etc:

1 *GR*, I, 530–34 (iii/298): Councils of Winchester and Windsor 1072 (*Councils and Synods I*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, II, 601–04)

2 *GR*, I, 770–74 (v/427–29): Council of 1112 at Rome (*Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum inde ab anno DCCCCXI usque ad annum MCXCVII (911–1197)*, ed. by Ludwig Weiland, MGH Constitutiones et Acta publica imperatorum et regum, 1 (Hannover, 1893; repr., 1963), pp. 571–72

Treaties

1 *GR*, I, 764 (v/421): Paschal II, promise to Henry V (*Constitutiones*, ed. by Weiland, pp. 142–44)

2 *GR*, I, 766 (v/422): Henry V, oath to Paschal II (*Constitutiones*, ed. by Weiland, p. 144)

3 *GR*, I, 780–82 (v/437): Henry V, Concordat of Worms (*Constitutiones*, ed. by Weiland, pp. 159–61)

Appendix 2

Documents quoted by William of Malmesbury in his Gesta Pontificum

(Passages in *GR* are cited by page).

Quotations from Aldhelm's correspondence:
Aldhelmi Opera, ed. by Rudolf Ehwald, MGH Auctores antiquissimi, 15 (Berlin, 1919)
1   *GP*, pp. 341–43: Aldhelm, letter to Hedda (*GP*), in fact to Leuthere (Ehwald, pp. 475–78)
2   *GP*, p. 335: Aldhelm, letter to Abbot Adrian (Ehwald, p. 478)
3   *GP*, pp. 358–59: Aldhelm, letter of advice to Wihtfrid (Ehwald, pp. 479–80)
4   *GP*, p. 337: Cellanus, letter to Aldhelm (Ehwald, pp. 498–99)
5   *GP*, p. 333: Aldhelm to Cellanus, extract from letter (this is all that survives: Ehwald, p. 499)
6   *GP*, pp. 339–40: Aldhelm, letter to Adilwald (Ehwald, pp. 499–500)
7   *GP*, pp. 338–39: Aldhelm, letter to Wilfrid's supporters (Ehwald, pp. 500–02)
8   *GP*, pp. 355–56: Aldhelm, letter to Winberht (Ehwald, pp. 502–03)
9   *GP*, pp. 379–80: Aldhelm, privilege for his monasteries concerning abbatial election (Ehwald, pp. 514–16)

Quotations from Alcuin's letters:
Epistolae Karolini Aevi, ed. by Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epistolae, 4 (Berlin, 1895)
1   *GP*, pp. 209, 268: Alcuin to King Æthelred, 793 (Dümmler, no. 16; also in *GR*, I, 104 (i/70))
2   *GP*, pp. 267, 267–68: Alcuin to Bishop Higbald of Lindisfarne, extracts, 793 (Dümmler, no. 20)
3   *GP*, pp. 255–56: Alcuin, 793x795? (Dümmler, no. 31)
4   *GP*, p. 246: extract of letter from Alcuin to Eanbald, 796 (Dümmler, no. 114; also in *GR*, I, 96 (i/65))
5   *GP*, p. 246: extract of letter from Alcuin to Charlemagne, 796 (Dümmler, no. 121; also in *GR*, I, 96 (i/65))
6   *GP*, p. 19: Alcuin, 797 (Dümmler, no. 128)
7   *GP*, p. 17: Alcuin to Archbishop Æthelweard, 798 (Dümmler, no. 230; also referred to in *GR*, I, 118 (i/82), and an extract from this letter in *GP*, p. 247)
8   *GP*, p. 18: Alcuin, 802 (Dümmler, no. 255; also in *GR*, I, 124 (i/87))
9   *GP*, pp. 256–57: Alcuin, undated (Dümmler, no. 273)

Quotations from letters and privileges of popes:

Philipp Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 2nd edn under the auspices of Wilhelm Wattenbach by Samuel Loewenfeld, Ferdinand Kaltenbrunner, and Paul Ewald, 2 vols (Leipzig, 1885–88), cited as JE or JL as appropriate with item number.

1 *GP*, pp. 46–47: Pope Boniface IV to King Ethelbert of Kent, 615: 'Dum Christianitatis vestrae' (JE 1998, under the year 610)

2 *GP*, pp. 47–49: Pope Boniface V to Archbishop Justus, 625: 'Susceptis vestrae dilectionis' (JE 2007; *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78), III (1878), 74; also in *GR*, I, 528 (iii/296))

3 *GP*, pp. 49–51: Pope Honorius I to Archbishop Honorius, *c.* 634: 'Susceptis vestrae dilectionis' (JE 2021)

4 *GP*, pp. 51–52: Pope Vitalian to Archbishop Theodore, 668: 'Inter plurima quae' (JE 2095)

5 *GP*, pp. 52–53: Pope Sergius I to Ethelred, Ealdfrith, and Ealdwulf, kings of the English, recommending Bertwald as Archbishop of Canterbury, *c.* 693: 'Donum gratiae spiritualis' (JE 2132)

6 *GP*, pp. 53–55: Pope Sergius I to the bishops of England, *c.* 693: 'Sicut nobis quibus' (JE 2133)

7 *GP*, pp. 334–35: Pope Sergius I, privilege for Aldhelm of Malmesbury , *c.* 701: 'Ea quae religiosae conversationis' (JE 2140; *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. by Ewald, pp. 512–14; also *GP*, pp. 367–70)

8 *GP*, pp. 240–41: John VI to Kings Æthelred and Alfrid, 704: 'De vestrae quidem religionis' (JE 2142)

9 *GP*, pp. 55–57: Gregory III to the bishops of England, 731–34: 'Dei omnipotentis immensae' (JE 2243)

10 *GP*, pp. 57–59: Pope Leo III to Æthelweard, Archbishop of Canterbury, 18 January 802: 'Pontificali discretioni' (JE 2510)

11 *GP*, pp. 393–94: Pope Nicholas I, letter to Charles the Bald concerning John the Scot, undated (JE 2833)

12 *GP*, pp. 59–61: Pope Formosus to the bishops of England, 892x896: 'Audito nefandos ritus' (JL 3506)

13 *GP*, pp. 61–62: Pope John XII to Dunstan, 960 or 961: 'Si pastores ovium' (JL 3687)

14 *GP*, pp. 258–59: Paschal II to Archbishop Gerard of York, 12 December 1102: 'Quanquam prave contra nos' (JL 5930)

15 *GP*, pp. 129–30: Paschal II to the bishops of England and Henry I, 24 March
    1117: 'Veniente ad nos' (JL 6547)
16 *GP*, pp. 263–64: Paschal II to Henry I, 5 April 1117 (JL 6552)

Miscellaneous letters:

1 *GP*, pp. 234: Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Æthelred, King of
   Mercia, concerning Wilfrid (*Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to
   Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, 3 vols
   (Oxford, 1869–78), III (1878), 171–72)

2 *GP*, pp. 236–37: Wilfrid to Pope John VI (*Councils*, ed. by Haddan and
   Stubbs, III, 257–58)

3 *GP*, pp. 399–400: Letter of Radbod, Prior of St Samson's, Dol, to Athelstan,
   King of England (*Councils and Synods I*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke,
   I, 38–40; also in *GR*, I, 820–22 (App 138B))

4 *GP*, pp. 23–24: synodal epistle of Archbishop Oda, 943 (*Councils and Synods
   I*, ed. by Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, I, 65–67)

5 *GP*, p. 42: Profession of obedience of Thomas, Archbishop of York, to
   Lanfranc (*Canterbury Professions*, ed. by M. Richter, Canterbury and York
   Society, 68 (Torquay, 1973), no. 34; *English Episcopal Acta*, vol. V: *York
   1070–1154*, ed. by J. Burton (Oxford, 1988), no. 1; also in *GR*, I, 534 (iii/299))

6 *GP*, pp. 44–46: letter of Lanfranc to Alexander II (extracts from *The Letters
   of Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. by H. Clover and M. T.
   Gibson (Oxford, 1979), 48–57, no. 4)

7 *GP*, pp. 116–17: Henry I to Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, letter
   concerning the defeat of Robert, Duke of Normandy, at Tinchebrai 1106
   (*S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. by F. S. Schmitt, 6
   vols (Edinburgh, 1940–51), V (1951), 345, no. 401).

8 *GP*, pp. 260–61: Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Archbishop Thomas
   of York (*S. Anselmi Cantuariensis archiepiscopi*, ed. by Schmitt, V, 420,
   no. 420).

Church councils, etc:

1 *GP*, pp. 42–43: Councils of Winchester and Windsor (*Councils and Synods
   with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, I: 871–1204*, ed. by
   D. Whitelock, M. Brett, and C. N. L. Brooke, 2 vols (Oxford, 1981), II,
   601–04)

Charters issued by Anglo-Saxon kings:
1 *GP*, pp. 350–51: Ethelred of Mercia, 681 (S 73)
2 *GP*, pp. 388–89: Ecgfrith of Mercia, 796 (S 149)
3 *GP*, pp. 354–55: Ine of Wessex, 701 (S 243)
4 *GP*, pp. 380–81: Ine of Wessex, 704 (S 245)
5 *GP*, p. 387: Cuthred of Wessex, 745 (S 256)
6 *GP*, pp. 387–88: Cynewulf of Wessex, 758 (S 260)
7 *GP*, pp. 390–91: Ethelwulf of Wessex, 22 April 854 (S 305)
8 *GP*, p. 391: Ethelwulf of Wessex, 854 (S 306)
9 *GP*, pp. 391–92: Ethelwulf of Wessex, dated 880, but 855 (S 320)
10 *GP*, pp. 394–95: Alfred of Wessex to Dudi, not dated (S 356)
11 *GP*, p. 396: Edward the Elder, 901 (S 363)
12 *GP*, pp. 401–03: Athelstan, 937 (S 436; also in *GR*, I, 222–24 (ii/137))
13 *GP*, pp. 404–05: Edgar, 974 (S 796; also in *GR*, I, 248–50 (ii/153))
14 *GP*, pp. 410–11: Æthelred the Unready, 982 (S 841)

Charters issued by others:
1 *GP*, p. 334: Leuthere, Bishop of Wessex, 675 (S 1245; also *infra* in *GP*, pp. 347–49, and *GR*, I, 44 (i/30))
2 *GP*, pp. 349–50: Cenfrith, *comes Merciorum*, 680 (S 1166)
3 *GP*, pp. 351–52: Berhtwald, nephew of Ethelred, 685 (S 1169)
4 *GP*, pp. 353–54: Baldred: exchange between Aldhelm and Baldred, 688 (S 1170)
5 *GP*, pp. 395–96: Malmesbury exchange with Ordlaf, with consent of Edward the Elder, 901 (S 1205)

MIXED MODES IN HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Joaquín Martínez Pizarro

When academic historians today pay attention to the literary makeup of their primary sources, they do so from methodological caution: tracing back elements of a historical narrative to a documented topos or a generic convention, for example, may allow them to question the value of a given source.[1] Literary analysis here serves as a filtering device, enabling scholars to detect and put in question materials unlikely to be based on fact, and has little or nothing to do with claims that historiography is 'mere' literature, a variety of fiction, not too different from novel writing.[2] Students of literature are in a different position. If, like myself, they are interested in early medieval narrative, they will pay particular attention to historiography because for that period it is the chief repository of narrative forms, the only other one of any importance

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[1] Two particularly fine instances of this type of criticism in the field of Roman history are T. P. Wiseman, *Clio's Cosmetics: Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature* (Leicester, 1979) and A. J. Woodman, *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography: Four Studies* (London, 1988). A stimulating recent discussion of methodology is David S. Potter, *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian* (London, 1999).

[2] A classical statement of this view is Hayden White, 'The Fictions of Factual Representation', in *The Literature of Fact*, ed. by Angus Fletcher (New York, 1976), pp. 21–44, repr. in Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, 1978), pp. 121–34. The same arguments at their most simplistic, well on their way to becoming a commonplace of the history classroom, may be found in Keith Jenkins, *On 'What is History?'* (London, 1995), esp. the chapter on Hayden White, pp. 134–79. The best rejoinder known to me is Arnaldo Momigliano, 'The Rhetoric of History and the History of Rhetoric: On Hayden White's Tropes', *Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook*, 3 (1981), 259–68, repr. in Arnaldo Momigliano, *Settimo contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1984), pp. 49–59, which focuses on the research involved in writing history and is not mentioned by Jenkins.

being hagiography which, in spite of many characteristic traits, cannot be considered wholly distinct from historical writing.[3] Though analysis by literary scholars will not centre on the text's function as a source of information, they cannot afford to neglect properly historical considerations. Often, features of its composition may have to be explained by the very events it covers and the author's need to report them.[4] As a literary endeavour, in any case, this sort of study has quite precise limits as to the kinds of conclusions it may draw, since it is not possible to generalize from the example of historiography. The narrative forms found in it may well be specific to historical writing. In the early Middle Ages, at least, we have no real terms of comparison and thus can say little about the diffusion of these forms and their importance elsewhere, since no other genres have come down to us. Our curiosity concerning narrative devices and styles and their evolution in the course of the first centuries of the Middle Ages can only be satisfied in chronicles, histories, and saints' lives. And if a tradition of fictional or fictionalized narrative existed at this time and has not survived, the only chance we have of catching a glimpse of what it might have looked like depends on a careful scrutiny of these explicitly non-fictional texts.

Having described the kind of thing I am looking for, I will now provide an illustration. Characteristic of early medieval historiography is a heterogeneous, discontinuous quality, a feature that originates in the methods used to compile historical narratives, whereby sources were incorporated into new works with all or much of their original form preserved. This formal incoherence eventually becomes a stylistic trait and shows up as an ingrained feature of the most important historical narratives of the period. I will begin by looking at a very early example, a sequence from the chronicle of Marcellinus Comes written in Constantinople in the early sixth century. The passage covers the period from September 460 to August 463:

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[3] On the highly problematic distinction between historiography and hagiography, see Baudoin de Gaiffier, 'Hagiographie et historiographie: Quelques aspects du problème', in *La storiografia altomedievale*, 2 vols, Settimane, 17 (Spoleto, 1970), I, 139–66 (with *discussione* pp. 179–96); Bernd Reiner Voss, 'Berührungen von Hagiographie und Historiographie in der Spätantike', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 4 (1970), 53–69; Martin Heinzelmann, 'Neue Aspekte der biographischen und hagiographischen Literatur in der lateinischen Welt (1–6 Jahrhundert)', *Francia*, 1 (1973), 27–44, and 'Hagiographischer und historischer Diskurs bei Gregor von Tours', in *Aevvm inter vtrvmqve: Mèlanges offerts à Gabriel Sanders*, ed. by Marc van Uytfanghe and Roland Demeulenaere, special issue, *Instrumenta Patristica*, 23 (1991), 237–58.

[4] This is not a common occurrence, although the catalogues of names in some heroic poems (e.g. *The Battle of Maldon*) may qualify as an instance.

XIIII
DAGALAIFI ET SEVERINI
Romanae ecclesiae Hilarus quadragensimus quartus pontifex factus vixit annos sex.
Maiorianus Caesar apud Dertonam iuxta fluvium, qui Hira dicitur, interemptus.
locum eius Severus invasit.

XV
LEONIS AUG. II SOLIUS
Iacobus natione Achivus, religione paganus, medicinae artis peritia tam ingenio quam
litteratura perclaruit. hic ob medendum Leonem Augustum febre defetigatum sacrum
palatii cubiculum vocatus intravit statimque in sella iuxta torum imperialem posita sine
ullo Augusti nutu consedit, sicque medicas adhibuit manus. porro meridie ad eundem
sacrum pulvinar reversus sublatum sui propter solium, in quo matutinus resederat,
protinus intellexit spondamque tori regiam intrepidus supersedit, verterumque studii
sui repertorum praeceptionibus monitum id sese gessisse, non temere praesumpsisse
aegrotantem docuit principem.

I
VIVANI ET FELICIS
Prosper homo Aquitanicae regionis sermone scholasticus et adsertionibus nervosus
multa composuisse dicitur. epistulae quoque papae Leonis adversus Eutychem de vera
Christi incarnatione ad diversos datae ab isto dictatae creduntur.[5]

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[5] *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: A Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. by Brian
Croke, Byzantina Australiensia, 7 (Sydney, 1995), pp. 23–24.
'1 September 460 – 31 August 461
'14th indiction, consulship of Dagalaifus and Severinus
'Hilary was made forty-fourth bishop of the Roman church and lived for six years.
Majorian Caesar was slaughtered at Dertona beside the river which is called Hira. Severus
usurped his position.

'1 September 461 – 31 August 462
'15th indiction, consulship of Leo Augustus (2nd) alone
'Jacob, a Greek by nationality and pagan in religion, was famous for his medical skills as much
as for his character and his writings. When he was called to the sacred bedchamber of the
palace to cure Leo Augustus, who was stricken by a fever, he came in and immediately sat
down in the chair placed beside the imperial bed without any signal from the emperor, and
so he applied his healing hands. When he next returned at noon to the same sacred couch
elevated near the seat where he had sat in the morning he immediately understood and,
undaunted, he seated himself above the royal bedstead. He explained to the ailing emperor
that he had not acted arrogantly but had done this in accordance with the practices of the
ancient founders of his discipline.

'1 September 462 – 31 August 463
'1st indiction, consulship of Vivianus and Felix
'Prosper, a man from the region of Aquitania, rhetorical in his language and vigorous in his
declarations, is said to have composed many things. In addition, it is believed that the letters

Held in place by indictional years and a consular list, we find three wholly different sorts of narrative elements. First, the telegraphic notices of imperial and pontifical successions and deaths characteristic of the more schematic historical genres, in this case the election of a Roman pope, the death of an emperor, and a usurpation. Such entries, strongly subordinated to the chronological frame, define the function of the narrative as a narrowly conceived institutional history, or rather a series of official dates in the development of secular and ecclesiastical institutions. The next item, however, is a fully formed anecdote that displays several characteristics of scenic or dramatic narrative. Clear indications of time frame the events within two moments of the same day: morning and noon, the physician's two visits to the sick emperor. At the center of either occasion we find a gesture, Jacob's significant position at the same level as or above the Emperor, which violates imperial protocol but is allowed by the traditions of his profession. The focusing of the entire episode on the repetition of this gesture, which then motivates an explanation, is a feature often found in orally transmitted anecdotes and jokes.[6] The involvement of the Emperor justifies its inclusion in the chronicle, and it appears that Jacob himself was a celebrated specialist of his day;[7] the ceremonial point rings true to the tradition of Byzantine historiography. It is the single instance of scenic narrative in the chronicle of Marcellinus.

Finally, the biographic/bibliographical note on Prosper of Aquitaine takes us back to the static, past-perfect narrative of the initial entries while introducing an expository dimension that is new. The temporal frame here is less simple than it appears to be, including both the past tense of Prosper's achievements — and Croke suggests the note may have been placed here because this was known to be the year of his death[8] — and the present of narrative tradition about him: 'multa composuisse dicitur', 'ab isto dictatae creduntur'.

One way of dealing with this variety is to identify the sources of the disparate elements. The note on Prosper, for instance, is taken from Gennadius's continuation of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*;[9] the anecdote about Jacob the physician occurs only in Marcellinus, and given its form it may be conjectured to belong

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of Pope Leo against Eutyches, concerning the true incarnation of Christ, which were sent to various people, were dictated by this same man.'

   [6] See Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989), pp. 53–55, 133–41.

   [7] *Chronicle of Marcellinus*, ed. and trans. by Croke, p. 96.

   [8] *Chronicle of Marcellinus*, ed. and trans. by Croke, p. 96.

   [9] *Chronicle of Marcellinus*, ed. and trans. by Croke, p. xxiii.

to the oral tradition of Constantinople; and so on. What I would stress, however, is that Marcellinus brought them all together in his chronicle, in their various forms, placing them one after the other in his chronological scaffold as items that were in some sense comparable, in some sense the same sort of thing, since they can represent successive periods of equal duration in a linear sequence. The format makes these entries, for all their formal diversity, stand for units of unfolding time, that is, for a wholly homogeneous series.[10]

In a widely read article in which he discusses the significance of early medieval annals and chronicles, Hayden White has argued that these texts are most often not narrative at all but a kind of rudimentary inscription of history with no more narrative value than a tally stick.[11] Given the neo-Hegelian criteria that White sets out from the start for historical narrative — for example, presence of a moralizing consciousness and of a source of legal authority against which the narrated events are projected, notion of a social center by which to locate events in relation to each other, narrative closure — this conclusion is not surprising. To counter it we will not need to reach out to classical (and minimalist) formulations, such as Aristotle's discussion of *mythos* as an arrangement of incidents, or Labov and Waletzky's influential and highly technical definition of narrative as 'any sequence of clauses which contains at least one temporal juncture'.[12] The chronicle of Marcellinus does have a narrative and intellectual unity if we know where to look for it, just as a tally stick, read in context, can tell a story. Its protagonist is the eastern empire, embodied in its population and its rulers; a sense of closure is provided, as in all chronicles, by Christian chronology and the expectation of the end of time strongly implied in the liturgical references that run almost uninterruptedly through the text. It is the undisguised discontinuity of the narrative that is remarkable: given the linear, itemized composition of this example, its various elements remain distinct and easy to tell apart, a handful of

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[10] At Kalamazoo, a member of the audience suggested that the varied components of Marcellinus's chronicle might be compared to the sections of a modern newspaper: political opinion in the editorial page, gossip in the society columns, biography in the obituaries, etc. An important difference, however, is that these divisions and the entire format of a daily paper remain identical for every day of the week.

[11] Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', *Critical Inquiry*, 7 (1980–81), 5–27, repr. in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1981), pp. 1–23 (pp. 6–15).

[12] Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Halliwell (London, 1995), chapters 7–8; and William Labov and Joshua Waletzky, 'Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience', in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, ed. by June Helm (Seattle, 1967), pp. 12–44 (p. 28).

odds and ends rather than a montage. The greater complexity of other early medieval histories can be explained by a combination of three processes:

1) The author comes to prefer one narrative form, which becomes dominant and in relation to which the other narrative modes are perceived as intrusions or embedded genres.

2) The various narrative forms themselves grow more complex. This is especially true of scenic narrative, which eventually comes to offer a large range of possibilities, from simple anecdotes to many-stranded tales with a large cast of characters.

3) These forms, frequently combined, get to influence and transform each other. An account of a battle in distanced, non-dramatic language can be made scenic by adding speeches, a few particularities of time and place, or a couple of gestures.

Here I will concentrate on the second of these developments, basing my observations on the chronicle of Fredegar, composed *c.* AD 658 in the Frankish kingdoms and most probably in Burgundy.[13] It has often been pointed out that this central text of Merovingian history is extremely discontinuous in form. J. M. Wallace-Hadrill and Walter Goffart have drawn attention to the great number of legends it contains.[14] In this respect, Fredegar's chronicle would seem to match a familiar stereotype for the historical narratives of the early Middle Ages: a sequence of rather dry annalistic entries about dynastic successions, territorial conflicts, and ecclesiastical affairs punctuated now and then by dramatic but unreliable *fabulae* and *narratiunculae*. The problem with this description is that in Fredegar the basic narrative never becomes homogeneous enough to contrast with the many *fabulae* in a consistent manner. In a study published in 1984,

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[13] I quote here from the most recent edition: *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii libri quatuor*, in *Quellen zur Geschichte des 7. und 8. Jahrhunderts*, ed. and trans. by Andreas Kusternig (Darmstadt, 1982). On Fredegar, see W. Wattenbach and W. Levison, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*, vol. I: *Vorzeit und Karolinger* (Weimar, 1952), pp. 109–14, and Walter Goffart, 'The Fredegar Problem Reconsidered', *Speculum*, 38 (1963), 206–41, repr. in Walter Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* (London, 1989), pp. 319–54. The manuscripts and editions of Fredegar are listed and described in Roger Collins, *Fredegar*, Authors of the Middle Ages: Historical and Religious Writers of the Latin West, 4.13 (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 119–33.

[14] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Fredegar and the History of France', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 4 (1958), 527–50, repr. in J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Long-Haired Kings and Other Studies in Frankish History* (London, 1962), pp. 71–94 (pp. 84–86), and Goffart, 'Fredegar Problem Reconsidered', pp. 345–52.

Georg Scheibelreiter suggested that Fredegar's work may not even be historiography *stricto sensu*, but rather a juxtaposition or assemblage of different literary forms.[15] Fredegar improvises constantly with the narrative modes available to him and presents them in new and surprising configurations. In II, 6, for instance, a chapter to which the most recent editor has given the accurate heading '*Verschiedene Ereignisse*' ('Various Events'), he combines a lengthy series of annalistic sentences on imperial successions, invasions, and battles, very much like those in the first part of the passage from Marcellinus, with an equally long and concise record of omens, presenting the two in regular alternation:

> Romanorum 45. Severus a senato Romae agustus appellatur an. Imperiae Leonis 5. Atrepennus Gallies comis et civis invedus Aegidio insignis inimicus, ut Gothorum fideretur, Narbonam tradit Theuderico. Mense Iunio in Gallicia coruscationem villae exuste, gregis ovium concrematae, carnis concise, pluviae de caelo mixtae cadent; duo adulliscentes, carne in invicem soledati adhaerentes, sunt mortui. In Armoricana provincia Fridericus, frater Theuderici regis, insurgens, cum his cum quibus fuerat superatus occidetur. Luna 15. Tunc conversa est in sanguine. In speciae lunae quinta sol ab hora tercia usque nona obscuratus. Wandali per Marcellinum in Sicilia caesi aefugantur. Aegidius comes veneno perit.[16]

Fredegar appears to be conscious of the uncommon diversity and disunity of his text, and one of his chief strategies to bring the narrative together is interpolation of all the sources from which he draws his material. A consequence of this strategy is that the chronicle is full of intertextual echoes; characteristically Fredegarian phrases are to be found in the middle of otherwise unaltered borrowings from Hydatius, Jerome, or Gregory of Tours.

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[15] Georg Scheibelreiter, 'Justinian und Belisar in fränkischer Sicht: Zur Interpretation von Fredegar, Chronicon II 62', in ΒΥ*ZANTIO*Σ: *Festschrift für Herbert Hunger*, ed. by W. Hörandner and others (Vienna, 1984), pp. 267–80 (p. 269): 'Fredegars Werk läßt sich daher nicht eindeutig der Gattung Chronistik, ja vielleicht nicht einmal ganz der Historiographie im strengen Sinne zuordnen, sondern besteht aus einem Nebeneinander literarischer Formen.'

[16] *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii libri quatuor*, ed. and trans. by Kusternig, Bk II, p. 6. 'In the fifth year of Leo's rule Severus was proclaimed emperor of the Romans by the Senate in Rome. Agrippinus, a Gallic count and citizen and a great enemy of Aegidius from envy, delivered the city of Narbonne to Theoderic in order to be trusted by the Goths. In Galicia in June houses were consumed by lightning and herds of sheep cremated, their flesh burnt to ashes; a muddy rain fell from the skies and two youths, who were fastened to each other by the flesh, died. In the province of Armorica, Frederic, the brother of King Theoderic, rose up in rebellion and was defeated and killed together with his supporters. At that time the full moon became the color of blood. From the third to the ninth hour the sun took on the appearance of the moon on the fifth lunar day. Defeated by Marcellinus, the Vandals fled into Sicily. Count Egidius died by poison.'

A number of heroic biographies stand out against this unstable generic background, told in scenic/dramatic style throughout and studded with legendary motifs: the stories of Theoderic (II, 56–59), of Justinian and Belisar (II, 62), and of Clovis's bridal quest, marriage, and conversion (III, 15–27) among others.[17] They have in common the device of representing the histories of nations through biographies of their rulers: Justinian, Theoderic, and Clovis stand for the eastern empire, the Ostrogoths, and the Salian Franks respectively. The striking generic uniformity of these narratives creates a largely (but not entirely) homogeneous stretch from the second half of Book II to the first half of Book III of the chronicle.[18] The *fabulae* in Fredegar have been described in different but by no means incompatible generic terms. Some of them display the contours of a biography or *vita*, certainly the story of Theoderic, which starts with the conception of the Gothic king and follows him to his death. The tale of Clovis's marriage and conversion has in any case been incorporated into a biography of the Frankish ruler, not all of which is legendary. It would appear that these narratives, given their use of scenic/dramatic style and their many analogues in legend and later medieval romance are in some sense products of popular tradition, *Volksüberlieferung* breaking out in the middle of a conventional historical narrative, very much like the anecdote of the physician and the Emperor turns up in Marcellinus Comes. On the other hand, the adjective 'novelistic' has often been used to describe stories of this sort, and the tale of Justinian and Belisar has been referred to by German scholars as a 'Belisarroman'.[19] What do such terms imply, and what can they contribute to our understanding of these narrative configurations?

To call such stories 'novelistic' draws attention to several distinguishing traits. In the first place, their plots are far more complicated than those of traditional legends; they involve subplots and, to use the vocabulary of contemporary film,

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[17] Ian Wood, 'Fredegar's Fables', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 32 (Vienna, 1994), pp. 359–66, studies these and other legendary elements in Fredegar and argues that they revolve around a limited and coherent set of themes: the ruler and his advisors, the importance of honest counsellors, the positive or fatal consequences of feminine advice.

[18] Though Clovis's career is covered in Bk III, Fredegar adds to the unity of this section as a whole by anticipating Clovis's defeat of Alaric II at Vouillé in AD 507, which he describes in Bk II, p. 58 as an episode in the life of Theoderic.

[19] Richard Salomon, 'Belisariana in der Geschichtschreibung des abendländischen Mittelalters', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 30 (1929–30), 102–10, describes Fredegar's narrative as 'eine Art von "Belisar-Roman"' (p. 103), and states that 'Der historische Stoff ist mit Novellenmotiven dicht umsponnen' (p. 107).

sequels and prequels.[20] Additional chapters are brought in, with legendary pro-
files of their own, to explain the parentage and conception of Theoderic and
Clovis. Dreams and visions about the yet unborn hero are explicitly interpreted
and, in the case of Theoderic, deliberately misrepresented by his enslaved parents
in order to get him adopted by their aristocratic masters (II, 57; pp. 50–52).
Characters in supporting roles, such as the Vandal king Gelimir, captured by
Belisar, and Aurelianus, Clovis's emissary in his bridal quest, become the pro-
tagonists of new episodes, as when Gelimir, a prisoner in Constantinople, takes
a terrible revenge on the courtiers who humiliated him (II, 62; pp. 76–78),[21] or
when Aurelianus, returning home from a successful embassy, loses and then
recovers the reward given him by Clovis's future queen (III, 18). In addition,
there are episodes involving the main characters that contribute nothing to the
central narrative line but are nevertheless preserved in full, as when Theoderic
defeats the Avar champion Xerxer, then allows him to go free back to his people
and by doing so persuades him to join his forces (II, 57; pp. 56–58). The story is
skillfully told, with a dialogue of the warriors over a river — in this case the
Danube — in the style of Germanic heroic poetry. [22] However, the incident has
little to do with the main subject of Theoderic's *vita*, which is Theoderic's rela-
tions with the eastern emperor and his court.

Complexity of plot, however, is not the only criterion that allows us to distin-
guish these narratives from plain traditional legends. The dramatic conception
of individual scenes is also more involved and sophisticated. Justinian and
Belisar, sworn brothers and *comites* in the imperial service, take up with two sis-
ters, courtesans of Constantinople and both named Antonia (II, 62; pp. 68–70).
One day, while Justinian sleeps in a garden and his Antonia watches over him,
she sees an eagle come down to shield him from the sun with its wings. She
understands immediately that this is an *omen imperii* and that her lover will be

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[20] On the tendency of traditional legend to construct plots of a single strand, see Max
Lüthi, 'Märchen und Sage', in *Volksmärchen und Volkssage: zwei Grundformen erzählender
Dichtung*, 2nd edn (Bern, 1966), pp. 23–48 (p. 42): 'Das bedeutende Einzelerlebnis ist Kern
alles Sagengeschehens, und so sehr steht der Erlebende im Banne dieses Erlebnis, daß er nur
mit Mühe von ihm loskommt. Erregt schildert er den Fetzen einer anderen Welt, der ihm
sichtbar geworden ist. Daher die Neigung der Sage zur Eingliedrigkeit.'

[21] Scheibelreiter, 'Justinian und Belisar', p. 279, n. 45, calls the Gelimir episode 'inhaltlich
ein Fremdkörper'.

[22] See Carol J. Clover, 'The Germanic Context of the Unferþ Episode', *Speculum*, 55
(1980), 444–68 (p. 447), and Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, 'Flyting and *Abenteuersage*', *Amster-
damer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 41 (1995), 71–83.

emperor one day,[23] and when he wakes up asks him playfully whether, if in the future he were to become emperor, he would make her his empress. Justinian, believing that there is no chance of that, promises her that he will and the couple exchange rings. Justinian then turns to Belisar, who appears to have been present all along, and tells him about the promise he has made. Belisar's Antonia proposes that when her sister is made Justinian's empress she herself should become Belisar's wife. Belisar agrees and a second exchange of rings takes place. The dialogue is in direct speech throughout, and much of its effect depends on the contrast between the initial lack of seriousness of the men and the deep calculation and secret knowledge of the women; in other words, dramatic irony has been built carefully and consciously into the story.

   Scenic conception can include more explicitly literary elements. Theoderic has already been summoned once to Constantinople by the emperor, who intends to have him killed, and has escaped with the help of his devoted friend and counselor, the senator Ptolomaeus. The emperor sends him a second invitation with identical aim and takes an oath from Ptolomaeus and the other senators that they will not warn his intended victim. A messenger from Theoderic comes to his friend to find out whether it is safe to obey the summons, and Ptolomaeus informs him that he has nothing to say, but that he should accompany him to court and report carefully to his master everything that he sees him do there. At court, Ptolomaeus proposes that fables be told for entertainment, and he himself proceeds to tell *cor cervi*, in which the stag, after a narrow escape from the lion king's claws, returns to court on a second invitation, is torn to pieces and then proclaimed to have had no heart, that is to say no intelligence and no character, because he put himself in danger again after his first experience. The messenger conveys this story to Theoderic, who takes the hint and stays in Italy (II, 57; pp. 58–60). Here the author combines the familiar motif of the ambiguous oath, by which Ptolomaeus keeps his oath to the emperor literally but still manages to warn his friend, with the more learned theme of reported behaviour that serves as a message, 'Tell him what you saw me doing', a device that goes back to Herodotus (tale of Thrasybulus, despot of Miletus) and Valerius Maximus, and would be used later by Notker Balbulus.[24] The very full dramatic version of *cor*

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[23] Procopius, *De bello Vandalico*, I, 4, reports an identical omen for Emperor Marcian.

[24] Compare Herodotus, *Historiae*, ed. and trans. by A. D. Godley (London, 1922–75), Bk V, p. 92; Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, ed. and trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA, 2000), Bk VII, p. 4; Notker Balbulus, *Gesta Karoli Magni imperatoris*, ed. by Hans F. Haefele, MGH Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, n.s., 12 (Berlin, 1980), Bk

cervi is itself quite remarkable, especially at this poorly documented stage in the history of the European fable.[25]

There are many other examples of complicated plots and elaborately staged episodes, and we might add that narratives of this general shape are found not only in Fredegar, but also in Paul the Deacon, Agnellus of Ravenna, and other early medieval authors.[26] What does it mean, then, to call such elements 'novelistic' and thus compare them implicitly to the Renaissance novella or to the novels of our time? One thing it need not mean is a lost literary source, a vanished genre of early medieval historical romances open to scholarly 'reconstruction' by the comparative method. On the other hand, the influence of the late antique novel as a model and not a source deserves serious consideration, especially since we know that the *Apollonius of Tyre*, at least, was familiar to Venantius Fortunatus *c*. AD 566–68 and to the author of the treatise *De dubiis nominibus* in south-western Gaul a few decades later.[27] As a purely formal model, the novel would have provided a new pattern for integrating legends about related figures and events, and a rich range of dramatic possibilities.[28] More

II, p. 12. See also E. Ploss, 'Das 9. Jahrhundert und die Heldensage: Eine kritische Betrachtung der Zeugnisse', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 89 (1970), 3–34 (pp. 22–26).

[25] For the ultimate source, see Babrius, *Babrius and Phaedrus*, ed. and trans. by Ben Edwin Perry (London, 1965), *Fabulae* 95. Avianus tells a similar story about a pig without a heart (*cor apri*), in which a farmer takes the place of the lion: *The Fables of Avianus*, ed. by Robinson Ellis (Hildesheim, 1966), *Fabulae* 30. J. Ziolkowski, *Talking Beasts: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry 750–1150* (Philadelphia, 1993), p. 29, remarks that Fredegar's version appears to have 'passed through oral intermediaries before reentering literature'.

[26] See, for example, in Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*, the stories of the war with the Heruli (Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. by L. Bethmann and G. Waitz, MGH Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum saec. VI–IX (Hannover, 1878), Bk I, p. 20), and the capture of Friuli by the Avars (ibid., Bk IV, p. 37); and in Agnellus of Ravenna's *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis* the retelling of the Rosimund story and the long account of Justinian II's revenge on Ravenna: *Codex pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis,* ed. by Alessandro Testi Rasponi (Bologna, 1924), pp. 96–97 and 137–44 respectively.

[27] Compare Venantius Fortunatus, *Opera poetica,* ed. by F. Leo, MGH Auctores antiquissimi, 4.1 (Berlin, 1881), VI, 8, lines 5–6: 'tristius erro nimis patriis vagus exul ab oris, / quam sit Apollonius naufragus hospes aquis'; and *De dvbiis nominibvs cvivs generis svnt*, in *Variae collectiones aenigmatvm merovingicae aetatis*, ed. by F. Glorie, vol. II, CCSL, 133A (Turnhout, 1968), p. 778, no. 181: 'GYMNASIVM generis neutri — sicut balneum — in Apollonio: "gymnasium patet"' (a reference to chapter 13 of the romance). See also *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyrii*, ed. by G. A. A. Kortekaas (Groningen, 1984), pp. 304–05.

[28] This influence is made the more likely by recent studies of the ancient romances that argue that this genre too develops from a Hellenistic tradition of fictionalized historiography.

speculatively, and dispensing with the hypothesis that the ancient novel served as a model, we could conjecture that what we have here corresponds to a well-known stage in the evolution of legendary narratives, namely cycle formation or the process by which in the *Waltharius*, for instance, legends about Attila, the Nibelungs, and Walter of Aquitaine are brought together in one plot, or by which the lays of Sigurd and Gudrun in the second half of the *Poetic Edda* come to form a novel in verse about the fates of several dynasties of heroes.

The importance of the narrative form described as 'novelistic' above lies just as much in its connection to specific contents as in its usefulness as a pattern for organizing stories. The contents of Fredegar's *fabulae* include, among other matters, wrongfully accused queens, wise and loyal counselors, and good and bad qualities of rulers, and the cast of characters is strikingly similar to that of ancient romances, particularly in the importance accorded to ministers, emissaries, and trusted confidants of the male protagonist. The events in Book IV of the chronicle, Fredegar's original contribution to Merovingian history, are arranged to illustrate these same topics, creating continuity between the earlier, more obviously legendary books, and recent events. A good example is the story of Gundeberga, queen of the Lombards, twice exiled and imprisoned by her husbands, the kings Arioald and Rothari, and liberated both times by adroit ambassadors of the Frankish kings, Ansoald first and later Aubedo (IV, 51 and 70). Ansoald organizes a trial by combat that proves the Queen innocent of a charge, and Aubedo simply threatens Rothari with the anger of Clovis II, who regards Gundeberga as a relative. The deathbed of Dagobert I is also characteristic, as the King expires flanked by his counselor, the mayor of the palace Aega, and his wife Queen Nantechildis (IV, 79).[29] Dagobert's successor in Austrasia, Sigibert, is soundly defeated by Duke Radulf of Thuringia when he joins battle without consulting an advisor: 'Sed hoc prilio sine consilio initum est. Haec adoliscencia Sigyberti regis patravit' (IV, 87).[30] The office of royal counselor is given considerable relief in these incidents, and the succession of mayors of the palace, who emerge as the official holders of this charge, is underscored by the use of a different form, the synthetic portrait, equivalent if not identical to the mini-biography of Prosper of Aquitaine in the chronicle of Marcellinus. These portraits, which consist of

See B. P. Reardon, *The Form of Greek Romance* (Princeton, 1991), pp. 141–45, and G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley, 1994).

[29] The conclusion of the chapter is significant: 'Aega vero cum rigina Nantilde quem Dagobertus reliquerat [. . .] condigne palacium gobernat et regnum.'

[30] 'But this battle was engaged without counsel. King Sigibert's youth was to be blamed.'

a brief character sketch and introduce a static, almost ecphrastic note, belong with the summary profiles that close the biographies of Suetonius rather than with potted bio-bibliographies in the tradition of Jerome's *De viris*.[31] Fredegar provides them systematically for Bertoald, Protadius, Claudius, Aega, and Erchinoald, whereas the only rulers to get comparable treatment from him are Chlothar II and the Emperor Heraclius. Unlike the portraits in Suetonius, these do not appear after the subject dies and his career is over, but instead when he comes to power. Fredegar omits the short physical description that is part of the formula and, like Suetonius, emphasizes permanent qualities of character rather than specific achievements or works. Erchinoald, the Neustrian mayor of the palace, for instance, 'erat [. . .] homo paciens, bonetate plenus, cum esset paciens et cautus, humiletatem et benignam voluntatem, nullamque tumens superbiam' (IV, 84).[32] This series of portraits serves to trace formally, by a change in the mode of narrative, the importance and unity of a major political shift in the transition from Merovingian to Carolingian history.[33]

I will now draw some very tentative conclusions. The three very different narrative devices that appear so discontinuous in Marcellinus, where they are simply juxtaposed — the annalistic entry, the scenic anecdote, the ecphrastic portrait — are also present in Fredegar, where they have grown into each other, presenting what may be described as a more fused and organic sequence.

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[31] In rhetoric this procedure is known as *notatio* and described as follows in Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium Lib. IV*, ed. by F. Marx, 2nd edn (Stuttgart, 1993), chapters 50, 63, p. 181: 'Notatio est, cum alicuius natura certis describitur signis, quae, sicuti notae quae natura sunt adtributa.' H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, vol. I (Munich, 1960), par. 250, invokes 'die das einmalige Individuum konstituierende *nota*' in a discussion of description as definition. By the seventh century, the list of *notae* or personal qualities had shrunk to what Jacques Fontaine refers to as 'l'énoncé litanique' (cf. J. Fontaine, 'Théorie et pratique du style chez Isidore de Séville', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 14 (1960), 65–101 (p. 75): 'la longue énumération de qualifications en groupes parallèles, que l'on pourrait appeler l'énoncé litanique', although in Isidore's terminology *notatio* and *adnotatio* had quite a different meaning).

[32] 'He was [. . .] a patient man, full of kindness, being patient and prudent, humble and benevolent, never swollen with pride.'

[33] Note the shrewd observation in S. Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique: Les origines de l'idée de nation en Occident* (Paris, 1984), p. 576: 'Notons cependant une nouveauté dans la *Chronique* de Frédégaire: ces mêmes qualités du "bon roi" y sont evoquées aussi comme étant celles des maires du Palais.' Collins, *Fredegar*, pp. 109–10, discusses these passages for clues to the author's political affinities.

The most conspicuous discontinuity in the sequence from Marcellinus is the story of Jacob the physician, coming as it does after a group of brief annalistic communications. This type of break in narrative style, considered typical of the early medieval chronicle, is usually put down to the account of brief, self-contained units characterized in their form by scenic/dramatic narrative (i.e. precisely circumscribed time, the use of direct speech, descriptions of gestures and other actions) and in their content by a shift to private and anecdotal matters rather than the politically significant developments expected of national or even local annals. Such fables or stories, frequently ascribed to popular legend, can evolve into complicated forms that show less affinity to the products of oral tradition than to sophisticated and fully literary genres. The similarities between ancient romance and Fredegar's scenic and anecdotal biographies of Theoderic, Clovis, and Justinian include not only complicated plots with subplots and supporting characters, but also deliberate irony, embedded genres, and recurring roles such as that of the faithful counsellor that seem to point directly to late antique fictions about young rulers and their loyal ministers. It seems highly probable that Fredegar's historical romances, whatever their immediate source, used such fictions or their plots as models.[34]

The fourth book of Fredegar brings a more harmonious combination of the three forms displayed side by side in Marcellinus. Rulers and their aides appear as historical protagonists, in episodes weighted with annalistic information. But the fates of queens and the value of wise and devoted advisors is a constant theme, clearly dictated by the same optic as the heroic *vitae* of Books II and III. And the ecphrastic portrait, though severely reduced, has found its place and function in this coalescence of forms: its periodic repetition serves to mark the emergence of the loyal subordinate as leading partner in the cast of characters. What appeared to be utterly different and thus necessarily discontinuous modes have been reinterpreted as a repertory of devices to be combined artfully and politically in a more complex narrative language.[35]

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[34] This is by no means to say that scenic episodes (or *fabulae*, or *narratiunculae*) should never be traced to popular legend. The point is only that an origin in *Volksüberlieferung* should not be assumed.

[35] The degree of formal fusion brought out in this analysis cannot be used as evidence for the unity of authorship of Fredegar's chronicle. Serious arguments in favour of more than one author are still under consideration (see, for example, Richard Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the Liber Historiae Francorum* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 13–17), and the internal symmetries outlined above could be explained by the influence of one author on another.

'SAD STORIES OF THE DEATH OF KINGS': NARRATIVE PATTERNS AND STRUCTURES OF AUTHORITY IN REGINO OF PRÜM'S *CHRONICLE*

Stuart Airlie

'The imagination is always at the end of an era.' With this remark of Wallace Stevens, Professor Frank Kermode undertook a remarkable study of ends and endings in fiction whose title, *The Sense of an Ending*, provides a way into investigating the significance of certain narrative patterns in the chronicle that is the subject of this essay.[1] This is the *Chronicle* completed in 908 by Regino, onetime abbot of Prüm. It is the last great world-chronicle of the Carolingian era and, not least because of its vivid account of the storms and stresses of his own time, one of the great works of Carolingian historical writing. As such, it has attracted the attention of acute historiographical commentators such as K. F. Werner and H. Löwe.[2] Despite the attention lavished on Regino as a historian the last word on his *Chronicle* has yet to be written. One reason for this is that we do not have a new edition of the text of

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[1] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford, 1967), p. 31.

[2] K. F. Werner, 'Zur Arbeitsweise des Regino von Prüm', *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 19 (1959), 86–116; H. Löwe, 'Regino von Prüm und das historische Weltbild der Karolingerzeit', *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter*, 17 (1952), 151–79, repr. and rev. in Heinz Löwe, *Von Cassiodor zu Dante* (Berlin, 1973), pp. 149–79 (references are to the reprinted version); see also Löwe's comments in W. Wattenbach, W. Levison, and H. Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*, vol. VI (Weimar, 1990), pp. 899–903 (hereafter, Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*); Hans-Hennig Kortüm, 'Weltgeschichte am Ausgang der Karolingerzeit: Regino von Prüm', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), pp. 499–513.

the *Chronicle* along the lines of the splendid edition of Thegan's and the Astronomer's lives of Louis the Pious which Ernst Tremp has produced for the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (MGH). The limitations of the older editions are well known.[3]

If our understanding of the *Chronicle* would be well served by a new edition it might further be enhanced by new studies of Regino's use of sources; his text would also surely repay examination for the relation between oral and textual elements in a history written in a monastic community along the lines of Matthew Innes's study of Regino's contemporary, Notker of St-Gallen.[4] As an acutely self-conscious writer, Regino himself seems to invite such an analysis when he highlights the distinctions between oral and written sources and his own experiences, and his handling of them in his work. He stresses that he used written and oral sources for the periods before his own times, improving the Latin of the former and critically selecting from both. For his own times, he provided broad coverage since '"aliter enim", ut Ieronimus ait, "narrantur visa, aliter audita"'.[5] Regino's concept of authorship was an active one. Further, Regino was not only a historian. Abbot of the great Lotharingian monastery of Prüm, and later of St

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[3] Hartmut Hoffmann took the flaws of the version produced by Pertz in 1826 as a starting point for an autopsy of editorial practices in the early days of the Monumenta: 'Die Edition in den Anfängen der Monumenta Germaniae Historica', in *Mittelalterliche Texte: Uberlieferung – Befunde – Deutungen*, ed. by Rudolf Schieffer, MGH Schriften, 42 (Hannover, 1996), pp. 189–232 (pp. 202–06). The later edition of Friedrich Kurze, published in 1890, also has its problems which were outlined by Wolf-Rüdiger Schleidgen in his study of the textual transmission of Regino's *Chronicle*, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Chronik des Regino von Prüm* (Mainz, 1977); Schleidgen criticized Kurze's failure to inspect personally all the surviving manuscript versions of the text, a failure which led to an imperfect understanding of the relationships of various versions of the text to one another and which, allied to Kurze's editorial principles, resulted in an edition that lacks a sufficient apparatus for signalling textual variants, but he did conclude, p. 176, that Kurze's text is for the main part sound. There is a clear brief summary of the problems by Gerhard Schmitz, 'Regino von Prüm', in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters Verfasserlexicon*, vol. VII (Berlin, 1989), cols 1115–22, at cols 1118–19; and further on the reception of Regino's text, see now Klaus Nass, *Die Reichschronik des Annalista Saxo und die sächsische Geschichtsschreibung im 12. Jahrhundert*, MGH Schriften, 41 (Hannover, 1996), pp. 52–61.

[4] Matthew Innes, 'Memory, Orality and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society', *Past and Present*, 158 (1998), 3–36; compare also Hagen Keller, 'Widukinds Bericht über die Aachener Wahl und Krönung Ottos I', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 29 (1995), 390–453 (pp. 406–09).

[5] Regino, *Chronicon*, ed. by F. Kurze, MGH Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi, 50 (Hannover, 1890), *s.a.* 814, p. 73; 'as Jerome says, "Things seen should be told in one way while things heard should be told in another"'.

Martin's at Trier, he wrote a volume on music and produced a great collection of penitential texts for episcopal use.[6]

In the light of the problematic richness of the above, my discussion of Regino's *Chronicle* in this essay can only be partial and provisional. I will analyse the *Chronicle* essentially, but not exclusively, along an interpretative axis provided by what I would argue to be a key passage, the entry for 888. In this well-known entry Regino vividly describes the crisis of political authority that erupted in the Carolingian empire after the deposition and death of Emperor Charles the Fat:

> Post cuius mortem regna, que eius ditioni paruerant, veluti legitimo destituta herede, in partes a sua compage resolvuntur et iam non naturalem dominum prestolantur, sed unumquodque de suis visceribus regem sibi creari disponit.[7]

Regino goes on to explain that this was the source of much future conflict as, while there were plenty of outstanding candidates for kingship among the aristocracy, none of them, not even the Carolingian ruler Arnulf, the 'natural lord' in Regino's view, possessed sufficiently compelling charisma to establish a Carolingian-style exclusive hegemony of rule. In fact, Carolingian blood did flow in the veins of some of the claimants of 888 who numbered Carolingian women among their ancestors, but Regino generally discounted descent in the female line, and the entry for 888 is thus the fulfilment of the declaration of the faltering of the Carolingian dynasty already made in the description of the entry for 880 of the rise and fall of the 'genealogia regum caelitus provisa'.[8]

Regino's *Chronicle* was the first to cover the rise and fall of the Carolingian dynasty. I shall argue that this means that even his accounts of the dynasty's flourishing are shadowed by knowledge of its crisis. In doing so, I will not be seeking to demonstrate a specious harmony or unity in the text, according to the tenets of (old) New Criticism, though such an approach can have its attractions. Rather, my approach can best be summarized in the deft summary of critical reading offered by Carol Braun Pasternak as seeking 'to identify [a] system of

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[6] Eduard Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', in *Rheinische Lebensbilder*, vol. VI (Cologne, 1975), pp. 7–27; Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, pp. 899–903.

[7] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 888, p. 129. 'After his death, the kingdoms which had been subject to his rule, as if lacking a legitimate heir, separated out from the body of his empire and did not wait for their natural lord but each decided to set up a king from their own innards.' On the Carolingian blood, transmitted by Carolingian women, of some of the competitors and on ideas of hereditary kingship, see C. Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich: Die Geburt Zweier Völker* (Cologne, 1990), pp. 370–71, and Keller, 'Widukinds Bericht', pp. 433–38.

[8] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 880, pp. 116–17; 'divinely ordained line of kings'.

meaning and think past those who participate in it to what is unthinkable in the system'.[9] Regino's text shows that this seemingly traditional Frankish aristocrat was thinking what was nearly unthinkable for the actors in his text, namely, that the crisis of the system of Carolingian dynastic hegemony which no longer provided the 'natural lord' for the empire revealed that that system, even at its height, was just another transient historical arrangement.[10] This narration of the crisis of an entire system means that Regino's account of recent Frankish history is more far-reaching in its implications than, say, the even gloomier account of the reign of Æthelred II to be found in the retrospective view of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.[11]

This essay is essentially divided into two parts. The second part offers a reading of Regino's text (mainly Book II). The first offers a context for that reading. This first part will look at the sort of history Regino wrote, the question of his intended audience, and the importance of Prüm as a site for Regino's composing of his *Chronicle*. By establishing this context, I hope to make the second part's reading of the *Chronicle* historically credible. There is, of course, a danger of circularity in linking a selected reading to a selected context but what I am aiming to do is to sketch out a field of historical gravity for an interpretation, that is, a historical meaning of the text.

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[9] Carol Braun Pasternak, 'Post-Structuralist Theories: The Subject and the Text', in *Reading Old English Texts*, ed. by K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 170–91 (p. 173).

[10] For Regino's view of the Carolingian ruler as the 'natural lord', see Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 888, p. 129.

[11] See Simon Keynes, 'A Tale of Two Kings: Alfred the Great and Æthelred the Unready', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 36 (1986), 195–217 (p. 201); still useful is Cecily Clark, 'The Narrative Mode of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* before the Conquest', in *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to D. Whitelock*, ed. by P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 215–35. The annalistic arrangement of Regino's text should not obscure its unity; Carolingian annals themselves should not be seen as being simply written up on a year by year basis; see Marlene Meyer-Gebel, 'Zur annalistischen Arbeitsweise Hinkmars von Reims', *Francia*, 15 (1987), 75–107 (pp. 96–104), and Rosamond McKitterick, 'Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of the Royal Frankish Annals', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 7 (1997), 101–29. Nor is the rather artificial distinction drawn by modern historians between history and chronicle relevant here; see Elisabeth M. C. van Houts, *Local and Regional Chronicles*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, 74 (Brepols, 1995), pp. 13–14.

I

Regino's interest in the past was not simply antiquarian. Although his *Chronicle* begins with the Incarnation and goes on to deal with the history of the Christian martyrs and the Roman Empire, he was particularly concerned with contemporary history. As he writes in his Preface, it seems shameful that the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans and other peoples should have had historians whose accounts of their deeds have come down to Regino's own time which seems to be a time that is to be passed over in silence by historians, as if it were a time in which nothing worthy of memory happened. Regino's focus will therefore be 'tempora patrum nostrorum et nostra'.[12] In its stress on the history of the author's own times, Regino's text differs from other, earlier, world-chronicles of the Carolingian era such as those of Freculf of Lisieux or Ado of Vienne. Unlike them, Regino wrote an account of Frankish history that covered both the rise and the fall of the Carolingian dynasty, and its deeds were central to his history. His first book ends with the reign of Charles Martel and his second book is titled 'On the deeds of the kings of the Franks'. Kings are thus at the centre of his history and the dissolution of the dynasty's unique claims to rule is a key element in his text.[13]

In contrast to another Prüm text produced at this time (possibly during Regino's abbacy), the great survey of Prüm's estates, which reveals an essentially conservative view of the political situation in its expectation of royal visits etc., Regino's history struggles to describe the transformed political framework brought about by the challenges to Carolingian rule.[14] When Regino finished his

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[12] Regino, *Chronicon*, *Praefatio*, p. 1; 'our fathers' times and our own'; and see also his reference to the problems of writing contemporary history, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 892, p. 139. See also the preface to Einhard's *Life of Charlemagne*, *Vie de Charlemagne*, ed. by Louis Halphen (Paris, 1938), pp. 2–4; English translation in *Charlemagne's Courtier: The Complete Einhard*, ed. and trans. by Paul Edward Dutton (Peterborough, ON, 1998), pp. 15–16.

[13] 'Incipit liber de gestis regum Francorum'; 'de [. . .] regum Francorum gestis plura descripsi': Regino, *Chronicon*, pp. 40, 73. For the general context of ninth-century historical writing, see Löwe, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 162, 174–76, and Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 18, 20.

[14] On the Prüm estate survey as a conservative text, see Ingrid Heidrich, 'Die kirchlichen Stiftungen der frühen Karolinger in der ausgehenden Karolingerzeit und unter Otto I', in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Regnum Francorum*, ed. by Rudolf Schieffer, Beihefte der Francia, 22 (Sigmaringen, 1990), pp. 131–47 (p. 140); for a case for dating it to after Regino's abbacy, see Erich Wisplinghoff, 'Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Klosters Prüm an der Wende vom

Chronicle in 908, Carolingians, in the persons of Charles the Simple and Louis the Child, were again ruling in west and east Francia, but the new non-Carolingian rulers were still there and duly feature in his text. Italy was ruled by Berengar I and Burgundy by Rudolf I. Rudolf's earlier claims to rule over Lotharingia are treated by Regino and the Carolingians in his text with unrelenting hostility and with the same lack of success that Regino says, in strikingly similar language, was brought to bear on the first non-Carolingian ruler of the ninth century, Boso of Provence.[15] But Regino was doing more than describing the changes in the political scene. He was himself an actor on the historical stage, as we shall see. His text can be seen as an active attempt to make sense of a new world and can be seen as a counterpoint to other texts and political strategies produced in this period as intellectuals and political leaders sought to cope with living in a politically pluralist world. It may be that he himself did not mourn the passing of the Carolingian exclusive claims to rule. He rather approved of Odo, for example. But the history he wrote was history that looked forward to a changed world.[16]

It is thus obvious that one dimension of the meaning of Regino's text lies in the response to it and the use made of it in the tenth century. It is significant that the continuator of the text, Adalbert, a monk of St-Maximin at Trier (where Regino was buried) who went on to hold high office under Otto I, comments on the 911 succession of the non-Carolingian Conrad to the Carolingian Louis in east

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9. Zum 10. Jahrhundert', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 55 (1999), 439–75 (pp. 452–54).

[15] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 888, p. 130, and cf. *s.a.* 879, pp. 114–15; on Regino's view of Rudolf, see W. Eggert, *Das ostfränkisch-deutsche Reich in der Auffassung seiner Zeitgenossen* (Berlin, 1973), p. 197.

[16] For Regino's positive view of Odo, Karl Ferdinand Werner, 'Les Robertiens', in *Le roi de France et son royaume autour de l'an Mil*, ed. by Michel Parisse and Xavier Barral i Altet (Paris, 1992), pp. 15–26 (pp. 16–17). On reactions to the new world of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, see Stuart Airlie, 'The Nearly Men: Boso of Vienne and Arnulf of Bavaria', in *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Anne J. Duggan (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 25–41 (pp. 26–30), and on its general contours, Gerd Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta: Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgedenken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert*, MGH Schriften, 37 (Hannover, 1992) and Janet Nelson, 'Rulers and Government', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. III: *c.900–c.1024*, ed. by Timothy Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 95–129. On telling stories as a way of 'building a significant and orderly world', see J. Hillis Miller, 'Narrative', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas M. Mclaughlin, 2nd edn (Chicago, 1995), pp. 66–79 (p. 69).

Francia as occurring because 'regali iam stirpe deficiente'.[17] Adalbert's later tenth-century reading of Regino agrees with the one proposed here in its view of the importance of dynastic change in the *Chronicle*, but there is also the question of a more immediate readership, that is, who was Regino's intended audience?

He certainly anticipated a contemporary audience. He dedicated the *Chronicle* to Adalbero, Bishop of Augsburg (d. 910), asking him to examine it critically.[18] The other works that Regino completed in Trier were also dedicated to high-ranking ecclesiastics: the treatise on music to his patron Archbishop Ratbod of Trier and the collection of penitential and canon law texts, although assembled at the request of Ratbod, to Archbishop Hatto of Mainz (d. 913).[19] These men all stemmed from Alemannia; they encountered each other at synods and royal meetings. King Louis the Child made a grant at Frankfurt to Ratbod of Trier at the request of Hatto and Adalbero in 908, the very year that Regino completed his *Chronicle*. Regino's dedicating of his scholarly works to such high-profile figures shows that he was no sequestered monastic figure but close to leading members of Louis the Child's government.[20] This point acquires more

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[17] Adalbert, *Continuatio ad Reginonis Chronicon* (in Regino, *Chronicon*, ed. by Kurze), *s.a.* 911, p. 155; 'the royal line failed'; Karl Hauck, 'Erzbischof Adalbert von Magdeburg als Geschichtsschreiber', in *Festschrift für Walter Schlesinger*, ed. by Helmut Beumann, 2 vols (Cologne, 1974), pp. 276–344 (pp. 282–83). On Adalbert's family and political connections, see John Nightingale, *Monasteries and their Patrons in the Gorze Reform: Lotharingia c. 850–1000* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 211–12; Adalbert may in fact have made additions to Regino's text as preserved in manuscripts of Kurze's 'A' group (see note 23 below): Schleidgen, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, pp. 88–91, 140–45, and on general tenth-century and later distribution of Regino's text, see especially pp. 130–54.

[18] Regino, *Chronicon, Praefatio*, p. 1.

[19] The prefaces to both texts are edited by Kurze in Regino, *Chronicon*, pp. xviii–xx.

[20] This point is stressed by Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 15–17. The grant of 908 is Louis the Child's charter no. 59, in *Die Urkunden Zwentibolds und Ludwigs des Kindes*, ed. by T. Schieffer, MGH Diplomata Regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum, 4 (Berlin, 1963). All three men were at the Council of Tribur, and presumably they could have encountered Regino there or at other meetings: MGH Capitularia Regum Francorum, 2, ed. by A. Boretius and V. Krause (Hannover, 1899), no. 252, pp. 209, 246; on this council, see now Christopher Carroll, 'The Last Great Carolingian Church Council: The Tribur Synod of 895', *Annuarium Historiae Conciliorum*, 33.1 (2001), 10–25 (pp. 18–19, on Ratbod, Hatto, and Regino). All three men appear in the text of Regino's *Chronicle*: Ratbod: *s.a.* 883, p. 126, *s.a.* 895, p. 144; Hatto: *s.a.* 891, p. 138, *s.a.* 899, p. 147; Adalbero: *s.a.* 887, p. 128, a particularly flattering reference. Regino's closeness to circles of power can be seen in his acting as jailer to Hugh, son of Lothar II; see below.

force when we consider that Adalbero, together with Hatto of Mainz, had baptized Louis in 893, had educated Louis, and was playing a key role in the young King's rule.[21] In sending a copy of his *Chronicle* to Adalbero, Regino may have been intending that it should serve for the edification of the young King whom Adalbero had in his charge. Writings on history had a role to play in the education of young Carolingians; in the 820s, Freculf of Lisieux had actually dedicated the second book of his world-chronicle to the young Charles the Bald. In other words, readers or recipients of historical texts were sometimes politically powerful figures who had to grapple with the sort of succession crises and the like described by Regino. Archbishop Hatto of Mainz, the recipient of Regino's canon law collection, had himself written urgently on the importance of hereditary claims as a basis of royal rule.[22]

If Regino was hoping for exalted contemporary readers, he was also wary of a readership closer to home and this was one that he did not relish having. In the sections dealing with his own unhappy experiences at Prüm he seems originally to have written at some length about his 'persecution' at the hands of his enemies among the Lotharingian aristocracy. This section, however, has vanished from all existing versions of his text, leading some historians to conclude that Regino

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[21] *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. by F. Kurze, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi, 7 (Hannover, 1891), *s.a.* 893, p. 122; Ernst Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Leipzig, 1887–88), III (1888), 497–98. Adalbero is called 'nutritor' in charters of Louis the Child; see no. 4 (*s.a.* 900), no. 9 (*s.a.* 901) and no. 65 (*s.a.* 909, i.e. close to the date of Regino's *Chronicle*) in *Die Urkunden Zwentibolds und Ludwigs des Kindes*, ed. by Schieffer.

[22] Freculf's letter is in *Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, MGH Epistolae, 5 (Berlin, 1899), no. 14, pp. 319–20, and the parallel between Freculf and Regino is drawn by Wolfgang Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm in der Karolingerzeit*, Rheinisches Archiv, 105 (Bonn, 1979), p. 70. General comment on kings and histories in Janet L. Nelson, 'History-Writing at the Courts of Louis the Pious and Charles the Bald', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Scharer and Scheibelreiter, pp. 435–42. Regino's integration of religious and secular history and his view of God's judgement as unfolding in contemporary history means that I would qualify the sharp distinction recently drawn between biblical history and contemporary history and the stress laid on kings' greater interest in the former by Mayke de Jong ,'The Empire as Ecclesia: Hrabanus Maurus and Biblical Historia for Rulers', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 191–226 (pp. 197–98). Hatto's letter, now generally accepted as genuine, is in H. Bresslau, 'Der angebliche Brief des Erzbischofs Hatto von Mainz an Papst Johannes IX', in *Historische Aufsätze Karl Zeumer zum 60. Geburtstag als Festgabe dargebracht* (Weimar, 1910), pp. 9–30 (pp. 27–30), with context in Airlie, 'The Nearly Men', p. 28.

himself deleted it in revising his text.[23] The fact that the transmission of his text cannot be traced to Augsburg and Adalbero, the text's dedicatee, but to Lotharingian sites such as the monasteries of St Maximin at Trier and Gorze shows that the *Chronicle* did find a Lotharingian audience, as Regino must have desired and feared. What this means is that Regino was perfectly sincere when he wrote of the danger of offending contemporaries among his potential audience. He expected his text to have some impact on his world.[24]

We turn now to our final preliminary consideration, the implications of historical narrative as written at Prüm for the meaning of Regino's text. This will essentially be the concern of the remainder of this essay, but in order to establish the validity of the proposed reading of the meaning of the text we have to consider the importance of Prüm as a site for the writing of Regino's history. Although Regino completed his *Chronicle*, as well as his other major surviving works, in Trier after his expulsion from the abbey in 899, it can still be considered to be a product of Prüm, and Prüm thus played a role in determining its form and meaning. The concern of the text with the glory and transience of the authority of Carolingian rulers stems from the context of Prüm. Regino almost certainly came from an aristocratic family from Altrip near Speyer, where Prüm held property from the eighth century.[25] We do not know when he entered Prüm, but by 892 he was well enough known there to be elected as abbot, doubtless in accordance with the recently expressed guarantees from Kings Charles the Fat (AD 884) and Arnulf (AD 891) that the monks could freely elect their abbot from their own ranks.[26] Certainly the information in the *Chronicle* on Brittany

[23] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 892, p. 139, and see also *s.a.* 899, p. 147. Manuscripts in Kurze's class A contain a passage here in which Regino refers darkly to his successor Richarius, brother of Gerhard and Matfrid. This local detail is missing from manuscripts of Kurze's class B, but that group has the passage in which Regino expresses his determination to go on to discuss his woes as part of his coverage of contemporary history. It is that discussion that has not come down to us; it is silently omitted from the B manuscripts and even the reference to it is missing from the manuscripts of the A class; see Kurze's apparatus at p. 139. For comment, see Eggert, *Das ostfränkisch-deutsche Reich*, p. 208; Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 13–14; Schleidgen, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, pp. 88–90; and Schmitz, 'Regino von Prüm', cols 1119–20.

[24] Regino, *Chronicon*, *Praefatio*, p. 1, and *s.a.* 892, p. 139; Schleidgen, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, pp. 131–39.

[25] Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', p. 12; on this property, see Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley 400–1000* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 190.

[26] Wisplinghoff, 'Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Klosters Prüm', p. 440, and see pp. 439–63 for Regino's relations with the monastic community, with observations at p. 446, n. 32,

and west Francia stems from the properties that Prüm held there, and it is even possible, though by no means definite, that, as a monk of Prüm, Regino had travelled to these areas.[27] Such information represents some of the material that Regino managed to take with him from Prüm to Trier. We may also assume that those 'seniores' ('elders') whose memories were a source for the *Chronicle* included brothers of Prüm as well as of Trier.[28] This is a reasonable assumption, not only because of the importance of Prüm in Regino's own life, but above all because of the special relationship of the abbey to the royal house and its history.

The abbey of Prüm was suffused with the aura of the Carolingian royal house. Situated in the Ardennes in what was to become the Carolingian heart-lands, Prüm was founded in 721 by Bertrada the elder, grandmother of Bertrada the wife of Pippin III, the first Carolingian king. It was Pippin and his wife who effectively refounded the abbey in 752 and richly endowed it in 762. As a royal abbey, Prüm continued to enjoy the favour of Carolingian rulers for generations and remained conscious of its origins and its obligations to the dynasty, which included prayer and commemoration.[29] After 855, at least one Carolingian ruler was permanently physically present in Prüm. Shortly before his death in that year Emperor Lothar I had renounced the pomp of worldly rule, been tonsured, and entered Prüm as a monk to live out his final days and be buried in this great Carolingian holy place.[30] In the upheavals of the 830s, Lothar had had his young half-brother Charles the Bald temporarily imprisoned in Prüm. Charles, however, bore no resentment towards the abbey and in the 850s still warmly

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on the possibility of identifying his enemies within the abbey; Regino himself stressed the validity of his election, *Chronicon, s.a.* 892, pp. 138–39.

[27] Werner, 'Zur Arbeitsweise des Regino', but see Schleidgen, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, pp. 14–16.

[28] Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 73; on the *Chronicle* as to some extent a Prüm text, see Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 20–22, and Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, pp. 898, 902, who also discusses annalistic writing at St Maximin, Trier, where Regino was buried, on pp. 893–94.

[29] Herbert Zielinski, 'Die Kloster- und Kirchengründungen der Karolinger', in *Beiträge zu Geschichte und Struktur der mittelalterlichen Germania Sacra*, ed. by Irene Crusius, Veröffent-lichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte, 93, Studien zur Germania Sacra, 17 (Göttingen, 1989), pp. 95–134 (pp. 102–09); Heidrich, 'Die kirchlichen Stiftungen', pp. 139–41.

[30] Regino, *Chronicon, s.a.* 855, p. 77; Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm*, pp. 33–34; and note Regino's account of the earlier monastic retirement of Carloman, *Chronicon, s.a.* 746, pp. 40–41, and commentary in Arno Borst, *Lebensformen im Mittelalter* (Frankfurt, 1973), pp. 528–29.

remembered his time there.[31] Prüm had also served as a secure house for other troublesome members of the dynasty. Regino tells us that he himself acted as jailer for Hugh, the son of Lothar II, and tonsured him with his own hands when Hugh was shut up in Prüm in the late 890s; Hugh was to die and be buried in Prüm. Regino thus appears as an actor in his own chronicle and the fact that he was entrusted with the imprisoning of Hugh shows how close he, as Abbot of Prüm, was to the power holders of his day.[32] The earlier imprisonment of Charlemagne's rebellious son Pippin the Hunchback in Prüm was still remembered by Regino's contemporaries.[33] Since the great aristocratic families of Lotharingia and further afield had members who were monks in Prüm, this intense Carolingian aura shone upon them, and Prüm was thus one of the great centres wherein the visions of the dynasty's glorious past and prayers and hopes for its hopefully equally glorious future could be transmitted to a politically important audience.[34]

If the political identity of Prüm ensured that the shadow of the Carolingians was bound to fall particularly heavily upon any ambitiously lengthy historical

[31] According to Lupus of Ferrières, in a letter to the Abbot of Prüm, Charles saw himself as a 'pupil' ('alumnus') of Prüm, Loup de Ferrières, *Correspondance*, ed. by Léon Levillain, 2 vols (Paris, 1927–35), II (1935), no. 83, p. 68.

[32] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 885, p. 125.

[33] Notker Balbulus, *Gesta Karoli Magni imperatoris*, ed. by H. F. Haefele, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, n.s., 12 (Berlin, 1959), II, chapter 12, pp. 72–74 (Prüm is not explicitly named by Notker, but it is clear from the context that he is referring to it); Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 885, p. 125, refers to Hugh's earlier imprisonment at St Gall; see Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, III, 240–41.

[34] Two charters, from the early and late history of the Carolingian dynasty, can stand as examples of this dynasty's links with the abbey: Pippin's of 762, i.e. his charter no. 16 in *Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns und Karls des Grossen*, ed. by E. Mühlbacher, MGH Diplomata Karolinorum, 1 (Berlin, 1906), and Arnulf's of 888, i.e. his charter no. 29 in *Die Urkunden Arnulfs*, ed. by P. Kehr, MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum, 3 (Berlin, 1956); see Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm*, pp. 31–53. On the monks of Prüm, see also Gerd Tellenbach, 'Der Konvent der Reichsabtei Prüm unter Abt Ansbald (860–886)', in *Festschrift für Max Miller*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für geschichtliche Landeskunde, 21, Neue Beiträge zur südwestdeutschen Landesgeschichte (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 1–10 (pp. 2–4). Of course, the Carolingians were not the only patrons of Prüm; on the relations of the aristocracy with the abbey, see, in addition to Haubrichs and Tellenbach, Ludolf Kuchenbuch, *Bäuerliche Gesellschaft und Klosterherrschaft im 9. Jahrhundert*, Viertaljahrschaft für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beiheft 66 (Wiesbaden, 1978), pp. 346–55, and Régine Hennebicque, 'Structures familiales et politiques au IXᵉ siècle: un groupe familiale de l'aristocratie franque', *Revue Historique*, 265 (1981), 289–333.

text generated there, its cultural identity was also relevant to such a text. Under Abbot Markward (829–53), the arrival of new relics of saints was accompanied by intense literary activity. The transfer in AD 844 of the relics of the martyrs Chrysanthus and Daria from Rome to Prüm was recorded in a Prüm text that was thus necessarily an account of part of the contemporary history of the abbey as well as a way of making that history part of the general history of salvation, as Wolfang Haubrichs has put it.[35] A more general concern with the history of the martyrs can be seen in the fact that Wandalbert produced his Martyrology at Prüm in 848; a copy of this was sent to Emperor Lothar I. Strikingly, Wandalbert notes the death day of Charlemagne within his text. Martyrologies could contain various types of history.[36] It is thus not surprising that for Regino, in his *Chronicle*, the account of 'triumphi quoque sanctorum martyrum et confessorum' was as much the stuff of history as the 'tempora principum et gesta'.[37] Another monk of Prüm, Ado, who became Archbishop of Vienne in 860, paralleled the work of Wandalbert and Regino by producing both a martyrology and a world-chronicle.[38]

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[35] Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm*, pp. 56–58; Julia M. H. Smith, 'Old Saints, New Cults: Roman Relics in Carolingian Francia', in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, ed. by Julia M. H. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 317–39 (pp. 328–29).

[36] Wandalbert's eloquent notice on Charlemagne's passing is in his martyrology, ed. by E. Dümmler, MGH Poetae Latini aevi Carolini, 2 (Berlin, 1884), p. 579, lines 51–53; on this text, see Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm*, pp. 58–60, and Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, pp. 896–97. Charlemagne's death was also included in the martyrology of Hrabanus Maurus and the calendar of Heiric of Auxerre; see Hrabanus Maurus, *Martyrologium*, ed. by John McCulloh, CCCM, 44 (Turnhout, 1978), p. 18, and B. de Gaiffier, 'Le calendrier d'Héric d'Auxerre du manuscrit de Melk 412', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 77 (1959), 392–425 (p. 408). On the relationship between history and martyrologies, see Arno Borst, *Die karolingische Kalenderreform*, MGH Schriften, 46 (Hannover, 1998), pp. 61–64.

[37] Regino, *Chronicon*, p. 40; 'triumphs of the holy martyrs and confessors' was as much the stuff of history as the 'times and deeds of rulers'; see Hans-Werner Goetz, 'Vergangenheitswahrehmung, Vergangenheitsgebrauch und Geschichtssymbolismus in der Geschichtsschreibung der Karolingerzeit', in *Ideologie e Pratiche del Reimpiego nell'alto Medioevo*, Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 46 (Spoleto, 1999), pp. 177–225 (pp. 195–96), whose stress on the Christian conception of Regino's history rightly challenges Kortüm's view of the text: Kortüm, 'Weltgeschichte am Ausgang der Karolingerzeit'; see also below.

[38] W. Wattenbach, W. Levison, and H. Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter*, vol. V (Weimar, 1973), pp. 622–24; see also Janet L. Nelson, 'The Franks, the Martyrology of Usuard, and the Martyrs of Cordoba', *Studies in Church History*, 30 (1993), 67–80 (p. 68).

This hagiographical activity may thus be seen as providing some of the soil out of which Regino's *Chronicle* grew. Prüm was a shrine to martyrs and saints and also, so to speak, to the Carolingians. A Prüm martyrology contains the names of Pippin and Lothar I, 'emperor and monk', whose death days were to be marked in the abbey's cycle of liturgical commemoration, and these entries were made in a hand dating from the 850s or 860s.[39] It is reasonable to assume that the monk Regino thus commemorated the deaths of Pippin on 24 September and of Lothar on 29 September. The historical time-span of nearly ninety years between these royal deaths (AD 768 and 855 respectively) was intensely contracted by the liturgical cycle into a matter of days. The transience of earthy rule was thus brought into sharp focus by this juxtaposition of the passing of kings. The same is true of historical thinking in Regino's Prüm. The exact nature of Regino's use of a postulated set of Prüm annals as a source for his Book II and the relationship between his *Chronicle*, these annals, and the surviving 'Annals of Prüm' remain problematic. It is likely, however, that both Regino and the 'Annals of Prüm' used these older annals, and what is significant, from our perspective, is that Lothar Boschen, who studied this problem in some detail, was struck by the view of history in Prüm annalistic material, which he characterized as consisting mainly of the death and succession of rulers.[40]

Such patterns of transience, the passing and succession of kings, found in the liturgical and historical culture of Prüm, and as encountered by the community in its own experience, echoed the larger patterns of human history. As Augustine said, human history is a 'series calamitatum' ('account of calamities') and Regino had surely absorbed Augustine's lessons on the transience of empires.[41] If, as Isidore of Seville said in his Etymologies (a text that Regino seems to have known), 'per consulum regumque successum multa necessaria perscrutantur', that fact of succession itself was one of history's most striking lessons.[42]

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[39] 'Martyrologium Hieronymianum e codice Trevirensi', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 2 (1883), 7–34 (p. 28); Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm*, p. 33, n. 20, p. 91, p. 100; Hartmut Hoffmann, 'Bernhard Bischoff und die Paläographie des 9. Jahrhunderts', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 55 (1999), 549–90 (pp. 570–71).

[40] Lothar Boschen, *Die Annales Prumienses* (Düsseldorf, 1972), pp. 204–26, with text at pp. 78–84; Löwe, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, pp. 897–98.

[41] Augustine quoted by Robert Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Age of St Augustine*, rev. edn (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 10–11; Löwe, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 169–70, p. 178.

[42] Isidore, *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols (Oxford, 1911), I, xliii, and see also I, xli; 'many necessary things can be examined through the succession

The narrating of this transience and the succession of rulers as well as of events in Regino's text reveals such events as possessing a 'structure, an order of meaning which they do not possess as mere sequence', to quote Hayden White.[43] Any analysis of narrative patterns in Regino's text must, however, accept that it remains severely limited because, in W. Martin's words, 'narration of the past is not prediction but retrodiction [. . .] it is the end of the temporal sequence which determines which event began it'.[44] We cannot be sure that the ending of Regino's text as we have it is the ending that he originally conceived or wrote for it. In the dedicatory letter to Bishop Adalbero, Regino says that he is bringing his *Chronicle* down to 'the present year 908', but the text as we have it only goes down to the year 906. Whether this is an accident or whether it reflects a conscious revision by Regino cannot now be known. This, together with the other textual problems of Regino, must sharply remind us of the particularly provisional nature of the analysis of authorial narrative offered here.[45]

But this same preface shows clearly that Regino conceptualized his work as a great sweep of time. He claims to have linked 'our times' and 'the times of our ancestors' by putting them into his *Chronicle*. As he says to Adalbero,

> Chronicam, quam de nostris et antecessorum nostrorum temporibus litteris comprehendi. [. . .] Quam in duobus libellis distinxi, exordium capiens a primo incarnationis dominicae anno et consummans coeptum opus usque in presentem annum, qui computatur a prefata incarnatione Domini nongentesimus octavus.[46]

Regino describes his work as moving from the Incarnation to 'the present year'. It is therefore structured by the flow of time from the Incarnation, a point

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of consuls and kings'; Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 237–41. On Regino's and Wandalbert's use of Isidore, see Haubrichs, *Die Kultur der Abtei Prüm*, p. 91.

[43] Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1981), pp. 1–23 (p. 5); on formal problems of narrative in fiction and literary theory, see also Geoffrey Galt Harpham, 'Ethics', in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Lentricchia and McLaughlin, pp. 387–405.

[44] W. Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca, NY, 1986), p. 74.

[45] Regino, *Chronicon, Praefatio*, p. 1 with the end of the *Chronicle* as we have it, *s.a.* 906, p. 153; Hlawitschka, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 19–20.

[46] Regino, *Chronicon, Praefatio*, p. 1. '[. . .] I have divided this chronicle into two books, taking the beginning of the first from the year of the Incarnation of the Lord and bringing the thus begun work up to the present year, which is 908 as counted from the aforementioned Incarnation of the Lord.' And cf. the chronological concerns at the end of Bk I, pp. 37–40.

reinforced by Regino's reference to the present year as counted 'from the afore-mentioned Incarnation'. The end of the text, as Regino conceived it, even though that is not necessarily as we have it, is thus linked with the beginning through the sheer passage of time, the sequence of years. This means that the immutable fact of the incarnation stands in contrast to the content of the Chronicle, which can certainly be seen in Augustine's terms, as 'the mutability of human affairs' ('mutabilitas rerum humanarum').[47]

II

As master narrator, Regino structures his material by making temporal links; he reveals sequels to events and stories. He is the teller of a long story. For example, he signals clearly that Lothar II's marriage to Theutberga was to be disastrous for his kingdom and that his readers will be shown this.[48] The account of the blinding and imprisonment of Lothar II's son Hugh in 885 is immediately followed by Regino jumping to the future in an account of how he himself tonsured this wretched Carolingian in Prüm sometime between 895 and 899.[49] Regino is present here as an actor, a jailer, in Carolingian history, but more to the point, he demonstrates clearly, in these extracts, how he is present in his own *Chronicle* as a controlling narrator, giving his stories an ending.

The *Chronicle* may also have a conceptual and thematic unity. Commentators such as Heinz Löwe have emphasized the importance of Regino's debt to the Roman historian Justin, claiming that this gave Regino a sober sense of the realities of power and its workings as well as a classical sense of the role of *fortuna* and mutability. Hans-Henning Kortüm has recently modified this view, but he too sees Regino's central focus as being on human deeds in a secular setting. There is a lot to be said for such views, and much of Regino's vocabulary and conceptual framework, as seen, for example in his account of the succession to

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[47] Markus, *Saeculum*, p. 11.

[48] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 866, p. 89: 'maxima ruina non illi solum, sed etiam omni regno eius accidit, sicut in subsequentibus luce clarius apparebit'.

[49] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 885, p. 125: 'iussu imperatoris [. . .] ei oculi eruuntur [. . .] novissime temporibus Zuendibolchi regis in Prumia monasterio manu mea adtonsus est [. . .] ubi non post multos annos moritur et sepelitur'; cf. White, 'Value of Narrativity', pp. 3–4, on narrative discourses that tell themselves.

Charles the Fat in 888, derives from Justin's account of Alexander the Great.[50]
But Professors Löwe and Kortüm may go too far. Much of Book II is in fact very
explicitly concerned with the action of the wrath of God in human history, espe-
cially in Regino's account of the divorce case of Lothar II and its consequences.
At a deeper level of structure Regino's text often juxtaposes the shifts of fortune
in this world with the steady rhythm of the calendar of heaven. Let us take as an
example his entry for the year 896.[51] Here Regino describes the journey of King
Arnulf to Rome, a journey that saw Arnulf gain the imperial title. Arnulf's cap-
ture of Rome is described by Regino as an event unparalleled since the seizure of
the city by Brennus and the Gauls. Arnulf is crowned Emperor on the eve of the
feast of the Confession of St Peter. But on his return journey from Rome Arnulf
is struck down by illness and remains weak for a long time. Meanwhile Lantbert,
son of Wido, dies and Louis, son of Boso, enters Italy. At this time, around the
feast of St Andrew, Count Albricus, who had killed Megingaudus, is himself
killed by another noble. Amidst all the wealth of detail, the theme is clear. In fact
the historical details establish the thematic truth. The entire entry demonstrates
the transience of worldly glory, the instability of political careers in this world:
Arnulf is the great conqueror of Rome but he falls desperately ill; Count Albri-
cus's triumph over Megingaudus is brought to nothing by his own death; later
entries will reveal that Louis, son of Boso, gained nothing from his trip to Italy.[52]
Above all, this helter-skelter world of political ups and downs appears all the
more transient and shoddy by being contrasted with the steady pulse of true
stability, that is, the Christian calendar: Arnulf's imperial adventure is dated by
the feast of the Confession of St Peter; the entry into Italy of Louis of Provence
and the death of Count Albricus are dated to the feast of St Andrew. Political
figures come and go, but the cycle of the feast-days of the saints continues and
mocks their puny efforts.

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[50] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 888, p. 128; Löwe, 'Regino von Prüm', pp. 152–68; Kortüm,
'Weltgeschichte am Ausgang der Karolingerzeit', pp. 506–12, discusses the influence of
Boethius; on early medieval interest in Justin's text, see Rosamond McKitterick, 'The Audience
for Latin Historiography in the Early Middle Ages: Text Transmission and Manuscript
Dissemination', in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. by Scharer and Scheibelreiter, pp.
96–114 (pp. 103–04). Justin's text is edited by Otto Seel, *M. Iuniani Iustini Epitoma Historia-
rum Philippicarum Pompeii Trogi* (Leipzig, 1935), and see Bk 13, chapter 1 and chapter 2, p. 123,
for the account of the succession to Alexander.

[51] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 896, p. 144.

[52] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 905, p. 150.

This juxtaposition of earthly events with the liturgical calendar is an important feature of Regino's narratives and gives these narratives a grimly ironic resonance. Thus, in the entry for 882, on the feast of the Epiphany (6 January), the royal monastery of Prüm is visited, not by a king, but by hostile Vikings who remain there for three days and devastate it by fire. Later that same year the Vikings attack Trier on Maundy Thursday and remain there till Easter. This reads almost like a ghastly parody of the royal *iter* as the joyful feasts of the Christian calendar are shadowed by the dreadful presence of the Vikings travelling balefully through the landscape of impotent royalty. Above all, we can see here how Regino uses the calendar, and these darkly ironic juxtapositions, to structure his narrative of history.[53] This is more than the ups and downs of *fortuna*. This is a picture of a world whose history reveals a clashing dissonance with the divine music of heaven. This picture is artfully created by Regino through his narrating of history in parallel with heavenly time. Surely not merely irony lies behind Regino's contrast of the liturgical calendar with the political one. Judgement must surely lie behind this: the judgement of Regino as narrator and surely also the judgement of God in history. To describe a society whose holy places are attacked on sacred days by pagan warriors is to describe a society under judgement.

It is true that Regino seldom invokes the judgement of God directly though he can do so with sombre eloquence. His vision of the devastation, which he views as worse than the Vikings, caused by the followers of Hugh, son of Lothar II, is a vision of the grim fulfilment by an enraged God of a curse uttered by Nicholas I, a curse duly noted and commented on by Regino in an earlier section of this tightly woven *Chronicle*.[54] All this means that Regino is not simply charting the workings of fortune. Further, his authorial skill and sense of the unity of his themes and of his material ensures that it can be dangerous to look at snippets of his text in isolation.

Regino's account of the events of 888 and their aftermath (that is, the challenge to Carolingian hegemony) is particularly significant from our point of view. Let us recall Regino's account of 888: he depicted it as an eruption of chaos

[53] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 882, pp. 118–19; on the contemporary import of such dates in the liturgical calendar, see Michael Sierk, *Festtag und Politik: Studien zur Tagewahl karolingischer Herrscher* (Cologne, 1995), pp. 268–69 and 272–75.

[54] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 883, p. 121: 'tanta rapina [. . .] ut inter horum et Nortmannorum malitiam nil differet. [. . .] Sic sic Deus omnipotens iratus regno Lotharii adversabatur [. . .] ut prophetia sanctissimi Nicholai papae simul et maledictum, quod super eundem regnum protulerat, adimpleretur'; and cf. ibid., *s.a.* 866, pp. 89–90.

caused by 'equality', lack of hierarchy, lack of hegemony. This is a rather differ-ent view from that offered by other contemporary texts. Both the *Annals of Fulda* and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle seem to suggest that Arnulf held, or could have held, a 'hegemonial position', in Timothy Reuter's phrase. The *Annals of Fulda* claim that the non-Carolingian *reguli* ('kinglets') emerged because Arnulf delayed in asserting his authority and goes on to describe how these kings then came to terms with Arnulf. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 'C' text says that

> ða wearð þæt rice todæled on .v. 7 .v. cingas to gehalgode. Þæt wæs þeah mid Eanulfes geðafunge, 7 hie cwædon þæt hie þæt to his handa healdan sceoldon forþon hira nan næs on fædrenhealfe to geboren butan him anum.[55]

There are some echoes of this in Regino, but overall his picture is starker in its account of the challenge to the Carolingian monopoly of kingship: Arnulf is simply one more ruler in what is now a landscape crowded with rulers. Regino's picture is ominously clear. This is not to say that he does not go on to offer visions of Carolingian majesty and specialness. Quite the reverse. His account of the years after 888 is full of old-style Carolingian resonance. At the end of the entry for 892, for example, we are told that 'Carolus filius Ludowici ex Adalheide regina, ut supra meminimus, natus in regnum elevatur'. This Charles was Charles the Simple and his birth was indeed described above under the year 878 where Regino discusses Adelheid's naming of her son; he states that Adelheid 'cui nomen avi imposuit eumque Carolum vocitari fecit'. In Regino's account, Charles the Simple, through his birth and his name, reaches back to the great days of powerful Carolingians. A similar concern with names, and their deploy-ment in narrative patterns of Carolingian legitmacy, is detectable in Notker of St-Gallen's *Gesta Karoli*.[56]

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[55] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. V: *MS C*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 2001), *s.a.* 888; trans. in *English Historical Documents*, vol. I *c.500–1042*, ed. and trans. by Dorothy Whitelock, 2nd edn (London, 1979), p. 199: 'The king-dom was then divided into five, and five kings were consecrated to it. It was done, however, with Arnulf's consent and they [the kings] said that they would hold [their kingdom] under him and not one of them was born to it in the male line but him alone'; *Annales Fuldenses*, ed. by Kurze, *s.a.* 888, p. 116; *The Annals of Fulda*, ed. and trans. by Timothy Reuter, Manchester Medieval Sources Series (Manchester, 1992), *s.a.* 888, p. 115, with Reuter's commentary at n. 2.

[56] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 892, p. 141. 'Charles, son of Louis by queen Adelheid, as we recalled above, was raised to the kingdom.' Ibid., *s.a.* 878, p. 114; 'gave him the name of his [paternal] grandfather [Charles the Bald] and had him called Charles'. Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni*, II, chapter 14, p. 78.

The women of the dynasty help to keep Regino's text suffused with Carolingian resonance. Under 894 he writes:

> Per idem tempus Hildegardis filia Ludowici regis, fratris Carlomanni et Caroli, a quibusdam ad Arnulfum accusata regiis possessionibus privatur et privata in exilium destinatur in monasterio puellarum.

This is all very much business as usual for the Carolingian family, but the feature that I would like to emphasize here is that in this little story we have three royal names (Louis, Carloman, Charles) plus the name of another king, Arnulf, plus the name of Hildegarde. Hildegarde is a very resonant name; it is the name of Charlemagne's wife, from whom all Carolingian rulers of the ninth century were descended. That Hildegarde is duly mentioned by Regino under the year 780, and here is the name again in 894.[57]

The very landscape after 888 remains Carolingian in Regino's text. He describes terrible events such as aristocratic feuds and Viking attacks, but where do they happen? In the kingdom of the long dead Carolingian Lothar ('regnum Lotharii'), where else? In 898 Charles the Simple, in Regino's words, journeyed to Aachen by the direct route ('recto itinere') and then went on to Nijmegen; the same phrase ('recto itinere') is used of Louis the Child's trip to Alemannia in 906. It surely also has the overtone of the route being the regular route, the fitting route for a Carolingian ruler.[58] Once again a Charles was in Aachen; once again a Louis was travelling through the *regnum*.

Regino's prose, therefore, continues to sound the sonorous chords of Carolingian identity and legitimacy even after his account of the watershed of 888. But Regino's seemingly conventional account of the traditional world of the Carolingian family is not conventional at all. It cannot be; Regino was writing after the Fall, so to speak. It is here that a glance at the work of Pierre Menard may be enlightening. One of the strangest writers of the twentieth century, Pierre Menard is a character in short story by the Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges; the story is entitled 'Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote'. In this tale, Pierre Menard,

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[57] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 894, p. 142; 'at around this time Hildegarde, daughter of king Louis, who was the brother of Carloman and Charles, was accused by certain people before Arnulf and lost her royal possessions and, having lost them, was exiled to a convent; she was soon forgiven and regained most of her property'; and see *s.a.* 780, p. 53, for Charlemagne's Hildegarde.

[58] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 898, p. 146, *s.a.* 906, p. 152; cf. Bernd Schneidmüller, *Karolingische Tradition und frühes französiches Königtum* (Wiesbaden, 1979), pp. 131–32.

a writer living in the twentieth century, rewrites Cervantes's great seventeenth-century novel, *Don Quixote*. As Borges says:

> Pierre Menard did not want to compose another Quixote, but the Quixote itself [. . .] he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original [. . .] his admirable intention was to produce a few pages which would coincide — word for word — with those of Cervantes.

Borges goes on to juxtapose extracts from Cervantes and Menard; for example:

> Cervantes wrote: 'truth, whose mother is history [. . .] witness of the past, exemplar and adviser of the present'; this is a mere rhetorical praise of history. Menard, on the other hand, writes: 'truth, whose mother is history [. . .] witness of the past, exemplar and adviser of the present'; the idea is astounding'.[59]

In other words the usual Carolingian music, so to speak, sounds very differently in Regino's *Chronicle* from how it sounds in, say, Einhard's *Vita Karoli* or the *Annales Regni Francorum*. For example, in the entry for 893, Arnulf, after meeting Charles the Simple at a great assembly at Worms, instructed counts and bishops to escort Charles to his own kingdom and to enthrone him on his royal seat. Here we have the traditional apparatus of Carolingian royal power: a king with the resonant name of Arnulf commands his followers, the counts and bishops who were the pillars of Carolingian monarchy (and Regino tells us that the bishops made lavish gifts to Arnulf), to establish another king with the even more resonant name of Charles in his kingdom. All this takes place at a great assembly, the traditional vehicle for the displays of royal power and authority in the Carolingian world, and the assembly was held in Worms, in the *Königsland-schaft* of the eastern Carolingians. But there was an unwelcome novelty. The west Frankish king, who had the very *un*-Carolingian name of Odo, defied them and stopped Charles in his tracks.[60] Men like Arnulf and Charles now live in a world, and appear in a text, where not all kings in the *regnum Francorum* were Carolingian. There were now kings called Odo, or as in the case of Louis of Provence,

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[59] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote', in Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (Harmondsworth, 1970), pp. 62–71 (p. 69). Only after completing this essay did I discover that Mary Garrison had already made use of Borges's story to illuminate the study of florilegia, 'The Collectanea and Medieval Florilegia', in *Collectanea Pseudo-Bedae*, ed. by Martha Bayless and Michael Lapidge, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae, 14 (Dublin, 1998), pp. 42–83 (p. 48).

[60] Regino, *Chronicon, s.a.* 893, p. 141.

kings who bore a Carolingian name but did not have a Carolingian father, and Regino carefully identifies Louis of Provence as Louis, son of Boso.[61]

What this means is that all Regino's narratives of royal authority can no longer be part of a grand narrative of exclusively *Carolingian* royal authority, which is what such narratives had been before the challenges to the dynasty in 879 (Boso of Provence) and 888 (the 'reguli'). Regino's text, as we have it, closes with what appears to be an account of Carolingian monarchy functioning at full power. The young king of the east Frankish realm, Louis the Child, is described as restoring order (after some lurid episodes of aristocratic violence); he holds an assembly at Tribur, 'villa regia', punishes unruly magnates, travels on to Strasbourg, and brings harmony to the quarrelling bishop and his people there. Then he proceeds to Alemannia 'recto itinere'. Meanwhile, the Bishops of Toul and Strasbourg die and are succeeded; the new Bishop of Toul, Regino tells us, was called Drogo. It is possible, though Regino does not say so, that this Drogo was a member of the Carolingian family; it is certainly a Carolingian name and the indisputably Carolingian Drogo, Bishop of Metz, has already appeared in the *Chronicle*.[62]

We thus seem to have here the full panoply of Carolingian majesty as deployed in narrative texts from the period of Carolingian hegemony in accounts of assemblies, royal justice, the royal itinerary, and royal peacemaking activities. Punishments and peace are imposed by a king travelling from a *villa regia* to another part of this kingdom while one of his relatives succeeds to one of the bishoprics of the realm. But Regino writes as Pierre Menard. The standard apparatus of royal power *cannot* be the same in his representation of it as it was in earlier accounts. The magic spell of Carolingian authenticity has been broken and the metalanguage has gone. The historical actors in Regino's text are in a text where the unthinkable has been thought. A Charles or Louis in Regino's text does not carry the same hegemonic weight that a Charles or Louis carries in a text of the high Carolingian era. It is this that makes the parallel with Pierre Menard illuminating. Regino's entire text (that is, the text of his second book, and possibly also of Book I) is shadowed by his view of the meaning of the events of 888. This is the radioactive centre that contaminates all parts of his

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[61] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 894, p. 142, *s.a.* 905, p. 150.

[62] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 906, pp. 152–53; Drogo of Toul is seen as a Carolingian by Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, III, 581, and Eduard Hlawitschka, *Lotharingien und das Reich an der Schwelle der deutschen Geschichte*, MGH Schriften, 21 (Stuttgart, 1968), p. 196.

narrative. It is not just Regino's post-888 Carolingians who live in a post-Carolingian world but even those Carolingians who appear in the earlier part of his *Chronicle*, as we shall see. Regino has composed a total narrative of the Carolingians. His is the first account of the rise *and* the fall of the dynasty. This means that in his *Chronicle* the dynasty is always already falling.

Regino is the Edward Gibbon of Carolingian historical writing. His Book II, especially in the sections after the death of Charlemagne, is the story of the decline and fall of the Carolingian and Frankish empire. His *Chronicle* celebrates the military prowess of the Franks and their leaders (for example of Charles Martel, described as 'bellicosissimus'), but by the middle of the ninth century Regino's empire-building Franks had met their match.[63] For Regino, the battle of Fontenoy, fought in 841 between the sons of Louis the Pious, was crucially important. Contemporary testimony on the battle stressed the scale of the slaughter of the Frankish noblity. Regino saw the slaughter as a self-inflicted fatal wound for the Frankish empire. After Fontenoy, he writes, 'ut non modo ad amplificandos regni terminos, verum etiam nec ad proprios tuendos in posterum sufficerent'. Timothy Reuter has said that this comment is 'understandable' and perhaps it is.[64] But Regino's near-contemporary Notker of St-Gallen did not think that the slaughter of the civil wars had impaired the military prowess of the Frankish kings. For him, in his *Gesta Karoli*, Louis the German cast a heavier shadow over the *gentes* than his predecessors had done; his Louis was an iron warrior whose military rule overawed his neighbours.[65] Thus not everyone, not even a commentator as worried as Notker, looked back to Fontenoy as a beginning of the end. Regino was not expressing a universally accepted truth. He was trying to chart and explain Frankish decline as an overall theme of the *Chronicle*. Vikings and Hungarians appear with increasing frequency as threatening menaces, and a great Viking victory casts Emperor Arnulf into deep gloom. Regino writes in the entry for 891: 'cum nuntiata esset suorum strages hostiumque

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[63] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 741, p. 40, on Charles Martel.

[64] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 841, p. 75; '[the Franks] could not only no longer extend their frontiers, but they could not even henceforth defend their own lands'. For Tim Reuter's comments on Fontenoy, see his *Annals of Fulda*, p. 19, n. 6, and on the contemporary significance of Fontenoy, see Janet L. Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), pp. 115–20. Writing a generation before Regino completed his *Chronicle*, Archbishop Hincmar of Reims dilated on Fontenoy's importance in Frankish history in a letter to king Louis the Stammerer that repays reading in this context: PL 125: 985–86.

[65] Notker, *Gesta Karoli Magni*, II, 11, p. 68 and II, 18, pp. 88–89.

victoria [. . .] querelam cum gemitu deponit, quod Franci eotenus invicti adversariis terga darent'. True, Arnulf goes on to rally and in fact to defeat the Vikings at the battle of the Dyle but, in the entry for 892, more Vikings are active and indeed manage to attack and devastate Prüm, as we have seen. This is what Fontenoy had led to.[66]

The shadow of Carolingian decline falls across the whole of Book II, and it does so in a variety of ways. Sometimes Regino is very explicit in his depiction of this shadow and sometimes it becomes visible through his structure. Either way, its presence is clear. Let me take one example of what I mean by structure. In the entry for 818 Regino tells us of the fate of Bernard, King of Italy, at the hands of his uncle Louis the Pious; Bernard is a victim of guile and deceit, a recurring motif in Regino's text. But Regino then leaps forward to his own time:

> Habuit autem iste Bernardus filium nomine Pippinum, qui tres liberos genuit, Bernardum, Pippinum et Heribertum; qui Heribertus Rodulfum comitem filium Balduini interfecit nostris temporibus et non multum post occisus est a Balduino, satellite Balduini fratris Rodulfi, qui Balduinus hucusque in Flandris ducatum tenet.[67]

Here Regino collapses the temporal distance between 818 and 900–08, when the killings he refers to took place, by means of a 'genealogy' in the male line that broadens out into a narrative. The narrative charts the sombre fate of one line of the Carolingian family — from the death of Bernard, King of Italy, to the death of his grandson. But it also constructs an even more disturbing overall pattern: the loss of Carolingian uniqueness and authority. The entry starts with Bernard, son of Pippin, King of Italy, and ends with a figure with the manifestly non-Carolingian name of Baldwin holding a dukedom. As the entry moves from Aachen to Flanders, an entire line of the Carolingian house falls from royal status

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[66] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 891, pp. 137–38, and *s.a.* 892, pp. 138–39. This section of the Chronicle is translated in *University of Chicago Readings in Western Civilization*, vol. IV: *Medieval Europe*, ed. by Julius Kirshner and Karl F. Morrison (Chicago, 1986), pp. 55–66 (p. 65): 'When the slaughter of his people and the victory of his enemies was announced to him, [Arnulf] moaned his grief that the Franks, who had not been defeated before, had now shown their backs to their adversaries.'

[67] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 818, p. 73; 'Bernard had a son, Pippin, and Pippin had three children: Bernard, Pippin and Herbert. In our own times Herbert killed Count Rudolf son of Baldwin and was killed soon after by Baldwin, a follower of that Baldwin who still holds the dukedom ('ducatus') in Flanders.' Regino is the only narrative source to give us the names of Bernard's descendants, though it is characteristic that he lists only the male line; Cristina La Rocca, 'La reine et ses liens avec les monastères dans le royaume d'Italie', in *La royauté et les élites dans l'Europe carolingienne*, ed. by Régine Le Jan (Lille, 1998), pp. 269–84 (p. 277).

and rulership over a kingdom down to the level of the followers of the new power-holders. As such this mini-narrative keys in to the broader narrative patterns and concerns that we have been examining.[68]

The gloomy fate of the Carolingian line is also revealed in the sheer temporal linearity of Regino's text; or, as Lorelei puts it in Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, 'fate keeps on happening'. Regino is careful to record the death and (usually) the burial place of Carolingian rulers and other members of the family. But he is not merely acting as a seismograph, registering such tremors in the political landscape as they happen, and so his listing of deaths acquires meaning. The first point to note here is how frequently the death of Carolingians occurs in Regino's text. In entries from 869 to 899 (I use Regino's chronology here) we find the deaths of twelve Carolingian kings, often with verdicts on or summaries of their career and information on their place of burial. We also find the deaths of five other members of the dynasty, all sons of kings. A total of seventeen deaths over roughly thirty years.[69]

But the requiem-like atmosphere is deepened if we analyse this pattern a little more closely. Three of the five non-kingly deaths are of royal sons predeceasing their fathers.[70] Regino's account of the accidental death of the little child Louis

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[68] On filiation in genealogies as metaphor for historical change, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Theory into Practice: Reading Medieval Chronicles', in *The Medieval Chronicle*, ed. by Erik Kooper (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 1–12 (p. 4).

[69] Regino refers to the death of kings, in many cases giving a precise (if not always accurate) date, in this section of his *Chronicon* as follows: Lothar II: *s.a.* 869, p. 98; Louis II of Italy: *s.a.* 874, p. 107; Louis the German: *s.a.* 876, p. 110; Charles the Bald: *s.a.* 877, p. 113; Louis the Stammerer: *s.a.* 878, p. 114; Carloman of Bavaria: *s.a.* 880, p. 116; Louis the Younger: *s.a.* 882, p. 118; Louis III of west Francia: *s.a.* 883, p. 120; Carloman of west Francia: *s.a.* 884, p. 121; Charles the Fat: *s.a.* 888, p. 128; Arnulf: *s.a.* 899, p. 147; Zwentibold (not referred to as king in the entry): *s.a.* 900, p. 148. The death of the non-Carolingian Odo is noted *s.a.* 898, p. 145. Charles the Bald's sons Carloman and Charles died in 881 and 866 respectively, but their deaths appear in a single entry in *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 870, pp. 101–02. The death of Hugh, son of Louis the Younger, appears in *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 879, pp. 115–16, while the death of Louis the Younger's legitimate son Louis is held back until the account of the death of his father in *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 882, pp. 118–19. The death of Hugh, son of Lothar II, is referred to, in anticipatory fashion, in *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 885, p. 125.

[70] Charles, son of Charles the Bald, seen by Regino as a 'filius regis' rather than as a king in his own right: *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 870, pp. 101–02, and Regino also refers here to the death of Charles the Bald's son Carloman, even though the latter did not actually die until 881, after his father; Hugh, son of Louis the Younger: *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 879, pp. 115–16; Louis, son of Louis the Younger: *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 882, p. 119.

at the palace of Regensburg in 879 is part of a carefully composed and death-haunted entry. In the course of it, he notes how the boy's father, Louis the Younger, was buried at Lorsch, as his father was.[71] Later he notes that Arnulf was buried at Altoetting as his father had been.[72] Such references, together with those to St-Denis, the burial place of west Frankish Carolingians, reveal in Regino's text a Carolingian landscape, a *regnum* full of the remembered presence of Carolingians, but they are dead Carolingians: 'Carolus imperator, tertius huius nominis et dignitatis, obiit'.[73] The Carolingians had a wonderful heritage; Regino could place Charles the Fat in a glorious sequence, but could that sequence continue? The roll call of the premature deaths of royal sons strongly suggests otherwise. These Carolingians look back — sons are buried beside their fathers — but there is very little sense that they can reach forward. Regino articulates the same concerns over dynastic continuity that can be found in Notker of St-Gallen's *Gesta Karoli*, but he does so even more urgently. Within the pattern of Carolingian extinction generated by Regino's listing of Carolingian death and burial, one of his later entries on burial at St-Denis acquires pointed significance. Under 898 he writes that Odo died and was buried, with due honour, at St-Denis. Even in death the old dynasty was to be challenged.[74]

We can see, then, that the seemingly neutral, factual listing of the deaths in the Carolingian house actually deepens the perspective of Carolingian decline. Perhaps Regino did not consciously intend in all instances to create this pattern, but the pattern is there in his text. Regino himself, however, also brings this pattern to light in explicit utterances that represent conscious authorial comments in his text. Thus he introduces Arnulf in the entry for 880 recording the death

[71] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 882, pp. 118–19; on east Frankish royal burials at Lorsch, see Janet L. Nelson, 'Carolingian Royal Funerals', in *Rituals of Power From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson, Transformation of the Roman World, 8 (Leiden, 2000), pp. 131–84 (pp. 167–69).

[72] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 899, p. 147, and see Schleidgen, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, p. 67, n. 301, and Alois Schmid, 'Die Herrschergräber in St Emmeram zu Regensburg', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 32 (1976), 333–69.

[73] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 888, p. 128. 'So died the emperor Charles [the Fat in 888] the third of that name and rank.'

[74] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 898, p. 145. Notker's worries over Carolingian dynastic continuity, expressed while Charles the Fat was still alive, are visible in his *Erchanberti Breviarii regum Francorum continuatio*, ed. by G. Pertz, MGH Scriptores, 2 (Hannover, 1829), p. 330, and in *Gesta Karoli*, II, 14, p. 78; see now Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 218–22.

of Arnulf's father Carloman; this death is directly preceded by the account of the
death and burial of yet another Carolingian: Hugh, the son of Louis the
Younger. Regino tells us that Arnulf's father gave him that name 'ob recordatio-
nem reverentissimi Arnolfi, Metensis ecclesiae episcopi, de cuius sancto germine
sua aliorumque regum Francorum prosapia pullulaverat'.[75] Here Regino appears
to chime with other sources. The 'Saxon poet', writing between 888 and 891, that
is, during Arnulf's reign, invokes the name of Arnulf as one of good omen; the
ancestral holy man of Metz sheds light on his descendant for whom a glorious
future is to be wished.[76] For Regino, however, that future was a known quantity.
What Arnulf of Metz shed on his descendant was not glory and lustre but irony,
as fortune's wheel turned downwards. Regino saw that the dynasty of kings
stemming from Arnulf of Metz had culminated in Charlemagne, but later
fortuna slipped away and the empire dissolved:

> Sed etiam ipsa regia stirpe partim inmatura aetate pereunte partim sterilitate coniugum
> marcescente hic solus de tam numerosa regum posteritate idoneus invenietur, qui
> imperii Francorum sceptra susciperet; quod in subsequentibus suo in loco lucidius
> apparebit.[77]

This is the entry for 880; the later crisis of legitimacy is here anticipated and
signalled. Regino's historical vision is a closed one; it is teleological. He knows
the sequel; he knows the end and thus composes and orchestrates his material in
order to sound the chords of that end throughout his narrative. Regino is not all
that interested in genealogical exactitude; not all Carolingian wives were sterile.[78]
But historical precision matters less to Regino than literary and structural pat-
terns that could make his meaning clearer. What counted here was to contrast

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[75] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 880, p. 116; 'in recollection of the holy Arnulf, bishop of the
church of Metz, from whose sacred seed his line, and that of the other kings of the Franks is
descended'; Otto Gerhard Oexle, 'Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf', *Früh-
mittelalterliche Studien*, 1 (1967), 250–364 (p. 279).

[76] *Poeta Saxo*, ed. by Paul von Winterfeld, MGH Poetae Latini aevi Carolini, 4.1 (Berlin,
1899), Bk V, pp. 58–59, lines 123–48; U. Penndorf, *Das Problem der Reichseinheitsidee nach der
Teilung von Verdun (843)*, Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung,
20 (Munich, 1974), p. 162.

[77] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 880, pp. 116–17; 'the royal house itself, partly through premature
deaths and partly through the sterility of its wives, faded away until only one man [Arnulf]
from such a numerous line of kings could be found as suitable to take up the sceptre of rule
over the Franks, as will clearly appear in its place later'.

[78] Schneidmüller, *Karolingische Tradition und frühes französisches Königtum*, p. 85.

the fertile ancestor, from whom a whole line of kings had sprung, with his hom-onymous descendant, the solitary ninth-century Arnulf. The Carolingian line, in Regino's artful scheme, narrows towards extinction. For Heinz Löwe one of the remarkable points about this passage is Regino's deployment of *fortuna*, rather than the wrath of God or the ravages of sin, as a means of charting events. Perhaps. But the 'sterility' invoked by Regino need not be a neutral factor. In the great divorce-case of Lothar II, a key feature of Carolingian history for Regino, Pope Nicholas I had pointed out that sterility could be the result of sin but it could be cured by divine grace. Regino had inserted precisely these papal letters in his *Chronicle* in his account of Lothar II's reign.[79] Their presence there can perhaps be seen as a time bomb ticking away until it is detonated in his reference to sterility in his account of Arnulf. Regino's juxtaposition of holy ancestor and sterile descendants contains not merely irony but also elements of judgement and criticism.

To recapitulate and conclude. Regino's text is carefully composed and strongly structured. To a great extent, it forms a unity. Anecdotes and the year-by-year entries are not isolated but make sense in relation to one another as part of larger patterns. I have concentrated here on one such pattern, one that I believe was important for Regino. As Abbot of Prüm, Regino had been head of a community which had been effectively founded by the Carolingians. This community still had traditional expectations of royal visits and of service owed to Aachen.[80] But his text is not traditional. Rather, it takes its place in the series of strategies, political actions, and texts that were to be the means of negotiating paths through the new, pluralistic world of the tenth-century. Writing his account of the past and the present, Regino demonstrated that the Carolingian future was all used up.

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[79] Regino, *Chronicon*, *s.a.* 866, p. 89, and cf. Nicholas I, *Epistolae*, ed. by Ernst Perels, MGH Epistolae, 6 (Berlin, 1925), p. 324; on the text of papal letters in Regino, see Schleidgen, *Überlieferungsgeschichte*, p. 90.

[80] Heidrich, 'Die kirchlichen Stiftungen', p. 140. This is not to suggest, however, that the actual economy of Prüm was frozen; see Yoshiki Morimoto, 'Aspects of the Early Medieval Peasant Economy as Revealed in the Polyptych of Prüm', in *The Medieval World*, ed. by Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson (London, 2001), pp. 605–20.

Narrating the Life of Eusebius of Vercelli[*]

Nick Everett

Et quidem bonos viros in hac terra fuisse non dubito, signa tamen atque virtutes aut ab eis nequaquam factas existimo, aut ita sunt hactenus silentio suppressa, ut utrumne sint facta nesciamus.

—Peter the Deacon to Pope Gregory I, *Dialogues*, Prologue 7[1]

(I do not doubt that holy men existed in this land, but I reckon that either their deeds and miracles never happened, or now they are so buried by silence that we have no idea what they did.)

Eusebius of Vercelli (d. AD 371) enjoyed an outstanding reputation in his day as defender of the faith against state-sponsored Arianism. He moved among some of the big names of the fourth-century Church. Eusebius convened councils with Athanasius of Alexandria and Hilary of Poitiers; Jerome granted him a place among his *viri illustri*; Ambrose hailed Eusebius as the first monastic bishop who combined 'clericorum officia et monachorum instituta'.[2] Eusebius's defiance of imperial power at the council of Milan (AD 355), his subsequent exile to Palestine, Cappadocia, and Egypt, and his involvement in the council of Alexandria (AD 362) were variably recorded by historians such as Rufinus of Aquileia, Sulpicius Severus, Socrates, Sozomen, and Theoderet. Eusebius is also reputed to have written in his own hand the earliest known complete text

[1] Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, ed. by A. de Vogüe, SC, 251, 260, 265, 3 vols (Paris, 1978–80), II (1979), 14.

[2] Ambrose, *Epistula* 14, extra collectionem, ed. by Michaela Zelzer, CSEL, 82 (Vienna, 1982), III, 273. B; 'clerical office with a monastic rule'. B. Agosti, 'L'epistola ad Vercellenses di "Ambrosius servus Christi"', *Rivista Cistercense*, 7 (1990), 215–17, has denied its authenticity. H. Savon, *Ambroise de Milan (340–397)* (Paris, 1997), pp. 326–29, is a convincing defence.

of the Gospels in Latin (*Codex Vercellensis*), pieces of his correspondence with Emperor Constantius, with Pope Liberius, and with his own suffragan clergy survive, and he is perhaps the author of a tract on the Trinity.[3] Eusebius's cult was quickly established. Within decades of his death sermons circulated commemorating his supposed martyrdom at the hands of violent Arians, and his posthumous healing power was widely known. Even the mother of Gregory of Tours vouched for the saint's ethereal abilities in firefighting.[4]

It is therefore surprising that Eusebius was not commemorated in a *Vita* earlier than the one that survives. Dated variously from the seventh to the ninth century, the *Passio vel Vita Sancti Eusebii Vercellensis episcopi* has been largely dismissed by historians as a vacuous, derivative work of no historical value,[5] so much that Ughelli's transcription of it, from an unidentified manuscript, and published in 1652 remains the only reliable and widely accessible edition.[6]

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[3] M. Ferrari, 'Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo', *Bollettino storico Vercellese*, 46 (1996), 113–25; and *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by E. dal Covolo, R. Uglione, and G. Vian, Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose, 133 (Rome, 1997). On the Codex Vercellensis, see note 48 below. The *De Trinitate* has also been attributed to Athanasius, Viglius of Thapsus, or Ambrosiaster. Bulhart's edition revived the theory of Eusebian authorship, but has not universally been accepted, for good reasons: *De Trinitate*, ed. by Vincent Bulhart, CCSL, 9 (Turnhout, 1957), pp. 3–99; cf. M. Simonetti, 'Qualche osservazione sul *De trinitate* attribuito a Eusebio di Vercelli', *Rivista di cultura classica e medievale*, 5 (1963), 386–93; and L. Dattrino, *Il 'De Trinitate' pseudoatanasiano*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 12 (Rome, 1976). A restatement of Eusebius's authorship is D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene-Arian Conflicts* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 239–42.

[4] Gregory of Tours, *Gloria confessorum*, ed. by W. Arndt and B. Krusch, MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 1.2 (Hannover, 1885), III, p. 750. Cf. Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum X,* ed. by B. Krusch and W. Levison, 2nd edn, MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum, 1.1 (Hannover, 1951), V.44, pp. 252–54. See M. Capellino, 'La tradizione vercellese e il culto di Eusebio', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 399–408.

[5] *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina, antiquae et mediae aetatis*, ed. by Socii Bollandiani, Subsidia Hagiographica, 6 (Brussels, 1898–99) with *Novum supplementum*, ed. by H. Fros, Subsidia Hagiographica, 70 (1986) (hereafter *BHL*), 2748–49. F. Savio, *Gli antichi vescovi d'Italia dalle origini all' 1300 descritti per regioni: Il Piemonte* (Formi, 1899), pp. 412–20 and 514–52. Based on a particular view of what constitutes the 'real' history of this period Savio's extremely negative opinions became canonical. F. Lanzoni, *Le diocesi d'Italia dalle origini al principio del secolo VII*, 2 vols, Studi e testi, 35 (Faenza, 1927), II, 1038; J. DeClercq, 'Eusèbe de Verceil', in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*, vol. XV (Paris 1963), p. 1481; Williams, *Ambrose*, p. 52.

[6] *Passio vel vita sancti Eusebii Vercellensis episcopi*, ed. by F. Ughelli, in *Italia sacra sive de episcopis Italiae, et insularum adjacentium*, 2nd edn, 10 vols (Venice, 1717–22), IV (1719), 749–61

It is true that hagiography is full of lies,[7] and early medieval Italian hagiography is certainly no exception, sporting its fair share of fanciful events, chronological absurdities, predictable plots, and stereotypical heroes, inspired far more by ideals of sanctity, requisites of genre, or claims to authority than reflecting the reality of a particular saint's life and times.[8] However, it is now appreciated that hagiography's literary ambitions can tell us much about both the author's and the audience's view of the world, their understanding of the past, and the narrative traditions they used to communicate a common sense of identity and purpose.[9] The *Vita Eusebii* (hereafter *VE*) certainly deserves such an analysis. It is comparatively long (over 6300 words), full of rhetorical artifice, and ambitious in scope, grappling with momentous events of the fourth century. The last of Diocletian's persecutions, the reigns of Constantine, Constantius, and Julian, and the rise of Arianism all form the backdrop to Eusebius's life and career. But more than that, the *VE* has serious pretensions to writing history: the hagiographer consulted existing chronicles, narrative histories, and documents, some penned by the saint himself, and wove excerpts into his narrative. Hence scholarly neglect of the *VE* seems a case of academic double standards: while the *VE* itself is dismissed as a corrupt construction of the past, it cites and transmits sources no longer extant and whose authenticity has never been questioned.[10]

This essay attempts to redress this neglect of the *VE*, both as historical source and as literary text, by focusing on how the hagiographer worked both as

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(1st edn = 1030–40). The text is known as the 'Vita antica' to distinguish it from later epitomes, especially that used by Jacob de Voragine in the *Legenda Aurea* chapter 108 (103) and published by B. Mombritius, *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, rev. edn, 2 vols (Paris, 1910), I, 460–61 (*BHL* 2751). M. Maritano, 'Bibliografia eusebiana', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 426–27, gives a full list of editions of the epitomes and of other (partial) editions.

[7] C. Leonardi, 'Menzogne agiografiche: il caso di Chiara da Montefalco', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter*, ed. by W. Setz, vol. V: *Fingierte Briefe – Frömmigkeit und Fälschung – Realienfälschungen*, MGH Schriften, 33.5 (Munich, 1988), pp. 433–39; and 'Il problema storiografico dell'agiografia', in *Storia della Sicilia e tradizione agiografica nella tarda antichità*, ed. by S. Pricoco (Soveria Manelli, 1988), pp. 13–23.

[8] P. Golinelli, *Città e culto dei santi nel medioevo italiano* (Bologna, 1991); N. Everett, 'The Hagiography of Lombard Italy', *Hagiographica*, 7 (2000), 49–126.

[9] R. Grégoire, *Manuale di agiologia: Introduzione alla letteratura agiografica* (Fabriano, 1987); *Bibliografia agiografica italiana, 1976–1999*, ed. by P. Golinelli and others (Rome, 2001).

[10] Compare M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*, Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum, 11 (Rome, 1975), p. 218, n. 18.

historian, in the sense of consulting documentary sources, and as narrator, in configuring that information to create a compelling account of Eusebius's life and times. For our anonymous hagiographer not only crafted his narrative to commemorate Eusebius as a saint worthy of a *Vita*, but needed to negotiate his way through existing written narratives, including the saint's own writings, that either gave an incomplete picture of Eusebius's career or, worse, slighted his hero's achievements by shining the spotlight on Eusebius's better-known contemporaries. We shall first examine the date of the text and then the *VE*'s treatment of the council of Milan, the central event which structures the work's main theme of Milan's dependence upon the (forgotten) metropolitan authority of Vercelli, before turning to Eusebius's role at the synods of Alexandria and Antioch, his conflict with Lucifer of Cagliari, and the *VE*'s silence on Hilary, all of which demonstrate how the *VE* was responding to existing written narratives and the eclipse of Eusebius's reputation. Finally, a brief look at the *VE*'s use of documents raises a host of questions about the hagiographer's method and sources now lost.

Documents, Chronicles, and the Novice Narrator

The *termini* (*ante* and *post quem*) are provided by the *VE*'s use of Cassiodorus's *Historia Tripartita* (AD 570s: hereafter *HT*) and the earliest manuscripts dating from the late ninth or early tenth century.[11] No one has yet uncovered philological clues in the text that would help us close this highly unsatisfactory gap of three centuries. Scholars, following Savio, have pointed to the first notices of Eusebius's supposed martyrdom in the martyrologies of, firstly, Bede and thereafter those of the Carolingian period as possible testimony to the *VE*'s

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[11] Five manuscripts are pre-1000: Gent, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS 244, fols 46ᵛ–55, *saec*. IX; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS lat. 5321, fols 126ᵛ–133ᵛ, *saec*. X; Turin, Biblioteca nazionale, MS F.III.16, fols 60–72, *saec*. X; Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 36, fols 41ᵛ–49ᵛ, *saec*. Xᵉˣ; Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 42, fols 90–99ᵛ, *saec*. Xᵉˣ. The Bollandist Web site (<http://bhlms.fltr.ucl.ac.be>) lists thirty-seven surviving manuscripts, most dating *saec*. XII–XIII. Ughelli claims to have edited the text from 'codex [. . .] vetustissimus vitae sanctorum Monasterii Nonantulani [. . .] videtur ante annum millesimum scriptus' (*Italia Sacra*, IV, 749C) which remains unidentified. The most likely candidate is Turin, Bib. naz., F.III.16, written in Emilia, possibly Nonantola, but V. Saxer ('Fonti storiche per la biografia di Eusebio', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 145–46) notes the manuscript contains different readings, suggesting either that Ughelli consulted another manuscript or that he 'corrected' the text considerably. For *HT*, see note 16.

circulation.[12] Yet sermons composed within a few generations of Eusebius's death, and clearly used by the *VE*, testify to Eusebius's early martyr status in Italy, and some recent commentators have tentatively suggested that the text which has come down to us may be the reworking of a late antique core.[13] However, the highly rhetorical Latin of the *VE*, though suggestive, is not necessarily indicative of an earlier date, as a similar style of language can be seen in seventh- and eighth-century Italian hagiography.[14] The immediate purpose or audience for this text remains elusive.

The hagiographer had a collection of sources available to him, but emphasizes at the outset that he is a novice:

> Quae domino auctore in hoc primo nostro opere conscripta sunt de beatissimo Eusebio Vercellensi episcopo, et martyre, ex historicis, ac chronicis illustrium virorum, nec non opusculis eiusdem sanctissimi viri per diversa loca missa relatione sanctorum patrum cognovimus, et hoc, fratres charissimi, in quantum valemus ab exordio primaevae huius aetatis narrare conabimur.[15]

The 'chronicis illustrium virorum' ('chronicles of illustrious men') alludes to Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, from which the author took the information that Eusebius was from Sardinia and that he served as *lector* in the Roman church.

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[12] Bede's brief notice is too general to have been inspired by the *VE*, but the information in the notices of Florus and Ado (AD 806–37, 850–60: 'ob confessionem fidei, a Constantino principe Scythopolim, et inde Cappadociam relegatus, sub Iualino apostata imperatore ad ecclesiam suam reversus, novissime, persequentibus Arianis, martyrium passus est') and similar notices in Usuard (AD 850–65) and Rabanus Maurus (AD 840–54) suggest the *VE* was the source. See J. Dubois and G. Renaud, *Édition practique des martyrologes de Bède, de l'anonyme lyonnais et de Florus* (Paris, 1976), pp. 73 and 140, and Hrabanus Maurus, *Martyrologium*, ed. by J. McCulloh, CCCM, 44 (Turnhout, 1978), p. 76. On the martyrologies, see Saxer, 'Fonti', pp. 148–51.

[13] Saxer, 'Fonti', pp. 144–46. Cf. R. Grégoire, 'Agiografia e storiografia nella "Vita antiqua" di Sant' Eusebio di Vercelli', in *La Sardegna paleocristiana: Tra Eusebio e Gregorio Magno. Atti del convegno nazionale di studi, Cagliari 10–12 Ott. 1996*, ed. by A. Mastino, G. Sotgiu, and N. Spaccapelo (Cagliari, 1999), pp. 187–200 (p. 189).

[14] Compare *Vita Gaudentii* (*BHL* 3278) and *Vitae Siri et Iuventii* (*BHL* 7976, 4619); Everett, 'Hagiography', pp. 92–96, and 'The Earliest Recension of the Life of St Sirus of Pavia (Vat Lat. 5771)', *Studi Medievali*, 43 (2002), 857–957.

[15] *VE*, 749C. 'The things which, by the Lord's command, are written in this, my first work, concerning the most blessed Eusebius, bishop and martyr of Vercelli, I have learned from historians, from the chronicles of illustrious men, from the few works of this same most holy man sent to various places to inform the holy fathers. And with this, most dear brothers, I shall try to narrate from the beginnings of his early life.'

Already we can detect an editorial process at work as the hagiographer has deliberately left out Jerome's mention of Eusebius's translation into Latin of the (now lost) commentary on the Psalms by Eusebius of Caesarea — for good reason, as we shall see. More important for understanding the overall design and purpose of the *VE* is the editorial process behind its use of 'historians'. The major narrative histories in the Latin west — Rufinus's continuation of Eusebius of Caesarea's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (written *c.* 391), Sulpicius Severus's *Chronicon* (*c.* 400), and the excepts from the Greek historians Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret translated and collected in Cassiodorus's *HT* (*c.* 560s)[16] — can all be said to have slighted Eusebius's importance in favour of other brave defenders of orthodoxy who snatched the Church from the jaws of Arianism: Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, and Pope Liberius. In these narratives, Eusebius was given much less coverage. Moreover, the hagiographer with hindsight also had to grapple with the awesome stature of Ambrose, who seemed to overshadow Eusebius's reputation and achievements as a metropolitan authority who defied imperial power and quashed the Arian heresy. Indeed, combing through his histories and chronicles for information on the saint, the hagiographer must have been as surprised as the modern scholar who long after did likewise to conclude that 'Eusebius must have been a more important personage than we are accustomed to think'.[17]

Constructing a narrative about the fourth century is no easy task; witness the remarkable amount of erudition and historical acumen applied in recent attempts to untangle the sequence of events and the motivations behind the 'search for the

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[16] I have consulted the edition of W. Jacob and R. Hanslik (Cassiodorus, *Cassiodori-Epihanii Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*, CSEL, 71 (Vienna, 1952)), but cite here the PL (69) edition for convenience. On the manuscripts, see Jacob and Hanslik, pp. xvi–xix (using ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts); *sed contra* p. viii, the *HT* was earlier widely known and used; see M. L. W. Laistner, 'The Value and Influence of Cassiodorus' Ecclesiastical History', *Harvard Theological Review*, 41 (1948), 51–67 (pp. 54–56, 63–64); R. Hansik, 'Epiphanius Scholasticus oder Cassiodor? Zur Historia ecclesiastica tripartita', *Philologus*, 15 (1971), 107–13; J. J. O'Donnell, *Cassiodorus* (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 246–47. On Epipanius's choice of selections, see L. Szymanski, *The Translation Procedure of Epiphanius-Cassiodorus in the 'Historia Tripartita'* (Stuttgart, 1963); cf. S. Lundström, *Zur Historia tripartita des Cassiodor* (Berlin, 1952).

[17] C. H. Turner, 'On Eusebius of Vercelli', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 1 (1899), 126–28 (p. 126), cited by Williams, *Ambrose*, p. 50, an upbeat account of Eusebius's importance. As metropolitan: E. Milano, 'Eusebio vescovo metropolitano: leggenda o realtà storica?', *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 30 (1987), 313–22.

Christian doctrine of God', in which Eusebius played a part.[18] Modern historians have done much to correct the triumphal perspective of fifth-century historians, who generally reduced the theological and political complexities of this period to a simple, binary model of Nicenes (and neo-Nicenes) versus Arians. Although our hagiographer certainly followed that model, he also needed to grant Eusebius his due as a central figure in this crucial period of ironing out definitions of orthodoxy and the relationship between Church and state after Constantine.[19] The catalytic event which thrust Eusebius into the historical limelight was his condemnation at the council of Milan in AD 355 and his subsequent exile, and our hagiographer suitably devoted the largest portion of his narrative to constructing an account of the council that reflected the Eusebius he had found in his sources.

Sign Up or Sign Off: The Council of Milan

By the early 350s Emperor Constantius was determined to consolidate support for his reign among Western churches by providing uniform definitions of doctrine that linked the two halves of his empire. To this effect he had sponsored the council of Sirmium in 351, which attempted to fine-tune the problematic creed set down at Antioch in 342, and reiterated the condemnation of certain recalcitrant bishops, especially Athanasius of Alexandria.[20] In reviewing Sirmium's decisions, Pope Liberius cleared Athanasius and requested the Emperor to hold another council in Aquileia to reconsider. Constantius only half complied. In 353, after defeating the usurper Magnentius, the Emperor called a council at Arles

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[18] R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinbugh, 1988), pp. 315–47; H. C. Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homöer: der Osten bis zum Ende der homöischen Reichskirche* (Tübingen, 1988); W. A. Löhr, *Die Enstehung der homöischen und homöusianischen Kirchenparteien: Studien zur Synodalgeschichte des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Bonn, 1986); T. A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, 1979); R. Williams, *Arius: A Heresy and Tradition* (London, 1987). A good survey of literature is A. M. Ritter, 'Arius redivivus: Ein Jahrwölft Arianismusforschung', *Theologische Rundschau*, 55 (1990), 153–87. See also T. C. Ferguson, *The Past Is Prologue: The Revolution in Nicene Historiography* (Leiden, 2005).

[19] *VE*, 751A.

[20] T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), pp. 109–43; Williams, *Ambrose*, pp. 11–68; Hanson, *Search*, pp. 315–47; Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, pp. 64–77.

where the court was residing. He simply reiterated the condemnation of Athanasius and further threatened the small number of bishops present to subscribe to the decisions of Sirmium or face exile. Liberius complained again, and Constantius responded by calling a council at Milan in 355, to force acceptance of Sirmium's decisions. Several bishops at the council refused to sign the document, including Eusebius of Vercelli, Dionysius of Milan, and Lucifer of Cagliari, who were subsequently exiled.

Both the narrative history of Rufinus and the *HT*, which the author undoubtedly knew, record little more than the council's occurrence and outcome, giving no detail on Eusebius's activities there.[21] Sulpicius Severus, however, claimed that during the council's proceedings Dionysius of Milan attempted to introduce some discussion of theology by agreeing to sign the condemnation of Athanasius on the condition that the assembly actually address matters of doctrine, 'sed [. . .] metu plebis quae catholicam fidem egregio studio conservabat, non ausi piacula profiteri, intra palatium congregantur', whence they issued a synodal letter in the Emperor's name. When it was read out in church, Dionysius refused to accept it, and was thrown out of the city.[22]

Dionysius's initial capitulation at Milan is certainly a major theme in the *VE*. But Hilary of Poitiers, although not present at the council, provided a near-contemporary description which gave the starring role to Eusebius of Vercelli, not Dionysius. Hilary reported that when Eusebius was asked to subscribe to Athanasius's condemnation, he replied that he would do all that they asked of him, but since he suspected some bishops present of heretical views, he asked that everyone there sign a copy of the Nicene creed, which he subsequently produced and placed in the midst of the council. Dionysius 'cartam primus accepit. ubi profitenda scribere coepit' when Valens of Mursa violently 'calamum et cartam e manibus eius violenter extorsit clamans non posse fieri, ut aliquid inde geretur', and so shifted the location of the council to the imperial palace, whence they issued the decree of exile.[23] H. C. Brennecke ruled out Hilary's description

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[21] Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, I. 20–21 (PL 21: 493B–495A), probably based on the (now lost) history of Gelasius of Caesarea, but see J. Schamp, 'Gélase ou Rufin: Un fait nouveau: sur des fragments oubliés de Gélase de Césarée', *Byzantion*, 57 (1987), 360–90.

[22] Sulpicius Severus, *Chronicon*, II. 39 (PL 20: 95A–158C, at 151B); 'but fearing the reaction from the people, who had striven to keep the catholic faith intact with much diligence, [the Arians] did not dare to publicly proclaim their profanities (*piacula*), but retired to the palace'.

[23] Hilary, *Liber I ad Constantium*, ed. by Alfred Feder, CSEL, 65 (Vienna, 1916), II.3, pp. 186–87. Dionysius 'was the first to pick up the document and began to subscribe' and Valens

of the council as ahistorical and anachronistic, but there seems no compelling reason to deny its veracity, and as we shall see the *VE*'s account largely supports Hilary's.[24] In any case it was a missed opportunity for the hagiographer, who looked to more immediate and complimentary liturgical sources at hand for inspiration to tell Eusebius's story.

Indeed the (surviving) source that can be detected behind the *VE*'s account of the council was a sermon written sometime around AD 400 and entitled 'De natale Sancti Eusebii episcopi Vercellensis', attributed by its earliest known copyists to Maximus of Turin.[25] It describes the 'passion' of Eusebius the 'martyr' who refused to succumb to the interrogative torture of the Arians in 'the Orient'

'snatched the quill and parchment from his hands, shouting that this should not happen, as it had nothing to do with anything'. The scandal caused the Arians to fear the 'judgement of the people'.

[24] H. C. Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II: Untersuchungen zur dritten Phase des Arianischen Streites (337–361)* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 174–84. Against this, M. Simonetti, 'Eusebio nella controversia ariana', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 178–79; Williams, *Ambrose*, pp. 17 and 51; and esp. Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 117–18, 143, and 282, n. 50.

[25] Maximus of Turin, *Sermones*, ed. by A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL, 23 (Turnhout, 1962), VII, pp. 24–27. Mutzenbecher rules out Maximus as author of this sermon and another sermon (*Sermo* VIII, pp. 28–29) on stylistic grounds: 'Bestimmung der echten *Sermones* des Maximus Taurinensis', *Sacris erudiri*, 12 (1961), 225–28. But Gennadius of Marseilles did attribute Maximus with two tracts on the life of Eusebius: 'Fecit et duos de S. Eusebii Vercellensis episcopi et confessoris Vita tractatus', Gennadius, *Liber de scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*, XL (PL 58: 1082A); cf. V. Zangara, 'Eusebio di Vercelli e Massimo di Torino: tra storia e agiografia', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 257–321. On the date of the sermons, see J. T. Lienhard, 'Patristic Sermons on Eusebius of Vercelli and their Relation to his Monasticism', *Revue Benedictine*, 87 (1977), 164–72; and Saxer, 'Fonti', p. 138. See also V. Zangara, 'Intorno all collectio antiqua dei sermoni di Massimo di Torino', *Revue des études augustiniennes*, 40 (1994), 435–51. The argument for an early date for this particular sermon ('A') rests upon identification of the 'Exuperantius' addressed in the sermon as a disciple of Eusebius: a likely candidate is the Bishop of Tortona who appeared at the council of Aquileia in AD 381. See Savio, *Gli antichi*, pp. 514–54. The revisionist dating of Picard cannot stand: see J.-C. Picard, *Le souvenir des évêques: sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du nord des origines au Xe siècle* (Rome, 1988), pp. 670–71, and F. Scorza Barcellona, 'Le più antiche tradizioni agiografiche vercellesi sul vescovo Eusebio', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 394–95. One of the earliest manuscripts containing these sermons, Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS C 98 inf. + M 77 sup. (*Codices Latini Antiquiores*, ed. by E. A. Lowe, 12 vols (Oxford, 1934–71) (hereafter *CLA*), III.322), *saec.* VIII, was certainly at Vercelli: see N. Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568–774* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 290.

after he had been exiled there by Constantius *princeps*. The sermon fails to mention the council of Milan but explains that Eusebius suffered exile because of a ruse he devised to rescue Dionysius of Milan (also called a 'martyr') from the hands of the Arians. According to the sermon, the Arians' perfidious doctrine had thrown Italy and the whole world into turmoil, their pestilent priests had seized upon Dionysius's *simplicitas* and convinced the hapless Bishop to subscribe to some sort of *chirograph* —a story in perfect accordance with Sulpicius, who implied that Dionysius was somehow tricked (or tricked himself) into signing the condemnation of Athanasius. The Pseudo-Maximus sermon describes how Eusebius rescued his *filius* with some trickery of his own, deceiving the deceivers by introducing a novelty in the midst of the proceedings:

> Sicut enim ait sanctus apostolus: *Factus sum Iudaeis quasi Iudaeus, ut Iudaeos lucrifacerem*, ita et sanctus Eusebius haereticis haereticum se esse mentitus est, ut de haeresi filium liberaret. Dixit enim se eorum consentire perfidiae, hoc sibi placere quod illis, sed quod sibi filium Dyonisium subscribendo praeponerent graviter se moueri. 'Vos enim, inquit, qui dicitis filium dei deo patri aequalem esse non posse, cur mihi meum filium praetulistis?' Qua illi ratione permoti statim sancti Dionisi chirographum deleuerunt priorem locum subscribendi beato Eusebio deferentes. Quos ille increpans et inridens ait: 'Neque ego me uestris sceleribus polluo neque filium meum uobiscum participare permitto.'[26]

This behaviour was enough to have Eusebius exiled in the east and subsequently martyred by Arians who tied him up and dragged him up and down a set of stairs in order to change his mind about what constituted orthodoxy. Although 'quanto plus illum Arriana perfidia corporaliter lacerabat, tanto magis eum catholica integritas spiritaliter refouebat',[27] eventually this interrogative technique resulted in breaking Eusebius's bones and fracturing his skull. The author of the sermon drew a fairly glib analogy between the stairs of the saint's martyrdom and

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[26] Maximus of Turin, *Sermo* VII, pp. 25–26. 'Just as the apostle says, "To the Jews I am a Jew, so that I might win Jews" (I Corinthians 9. 20), likewise the holy Eusebius lied and made himself a heretic for the heretics, in order to liberate his son [Dionysius] from heresy. For he said he would consent to their treachery, if this would make them happy, but the fact that they had placed his son Dionysius before him to subscribe [the document] gravely upset him. "For you," he said, "you say the son of God cannot be equal to God, so why do you place my son before me?" This argument immediately disturbed them, and they deleted the autograph of Dionysius and asked Eusebius to sign in its place. But he then just mocked them, and laughing said: "I will not pollute myself with your evil, nor do I permit you my son to associate with you in any way."'

[27] Maximus of Turin, *Sermo* VII, p. 26; 'the more Arian wickedness harmed him corporally, the more catholic purity (*integritas*) revived him spiritually'.

the *scalae* of Jacob's ladder (Genesis 28. 12): Eusebius went up to heaven, the Arians down to the depths of hell.

Accommodating Heretics?

The use of the same, strained analogy of the ladder in the *VE*, as well as some linguistic borrowing, makes it clear that the sermon served as source and inspiration for the hagiographer,[28] and from it he also borrowed whole-scale the motif of 'subordinate signatures' as Eusebius's cunning plan. Hence it is all the more noticeable that our hagiographer left alone completely the Pauline quotation and notion that Eusebius 'became a heretic' to defeat the Arians. Interestingly, there are some suggestions in our sources that the Vercellese prelate was not a model of Nicene orthodoxy, or at least as was to be defined after his time.[29] In *De viris illustribus*, Jerome noted that Eusebius edited and translated from Greek into Latin the commentary on the Psalms by Eusebius of Caesarea, now not extant.[30] Jerome cited this same work again when defending himself against criticism of his translation of Origen:

> Sit in culpa eiusdem confessionis Vercellensis Eusebius, qui omnium psalmorum commentarios heretici hominis vertit in nostrum eloquium, licet heretica praetermittens, optima quaeque transtulerit.[31]

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[28] *VE*, 757B, redeployed to launch an anti-Arian diatribe. For a linguistic echo compare Maximus of Turin, *Sermo* VII: '[. . .] scalarum proclivi tractu supinis pedibus ad imum usque traheretur; et iterum revocatus ad summum' (p. 26) with 'Erant autem ingentes scalae ipsius domus, unde trahebatur per hos scalarum gradus ab Arrianis supinus B. Eusebius [. . .]. Trahebant autem eum a summo usque ad imum, rursumque ab imo usque sursum' (*VE*, 756D). The hagiographer also borrowed from *Sermo* VIII: 'De depositione [. . .] Eusebii' (pp. 28–29), the theme of Eusebius's vision of himself flying 'de monte ad montem' on the Kalends of August as a prefiguration of his death (with accompanying scriptural citation of Psalm 38. 5 'Notum fac mihi domine'), *VE*, 760B.

[29] *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, ed. by M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams (Edinburgh, 1993), and above, note 19.

[30] Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, XCVI (PL 23: 697B). Eusebius of Caesarea's commentary has survived in part: C. Curti, *Eusebiana I. Commentarii in Psalmos*, 2nd edn, Saggi e testi classici, cristiani e medievali, 1 (Catania, 1989).

[31] Jerome, *Epistola ad Vigilantium* (*Ep*. 61), ed. by J. Labourt, *Lettres: Saint Jérôme*, 8 vols (Paris, 1949–63), III (1953), 111 (PL 22: 603). 'Equally culpable would be Eusebius of Vercelli, who translated into our language the commentary of all the Psalms written by a heretical man, although, leaving aside the heresies, he has given us all the better passages.'

Eusebius dabbled in dodgy texts, but Jerome cleared him of any charge of heresy. Other sources were less exculpatory. 'Ambrosiaster', writing around same time as Jerome, about the nature of the Holy Spirit recalled,

> Memimi me in quodam libello Eusebii, quondam egregii in reliquis viri, legisse, quia nec spiritus sanctus sciat mysterium nativitatis domini Iesu Christi, et admiror tantae doctrinae virum hanc maculam sancto spiritui inflixesse.[32]

Not all scholars agree that the Eusebius in question is the Bishop of Vercelli, though it is the most convincing identification. Yet another source casts a shadow on the prelate's reputation. The *Altercatio Heracliani laici cum Germinio episcopo Sirmiensi* is a record of an Arian bishop, Germinius of Sirmium, interrogating a layman (*c.* AD 366, in Sirmium) who professed Nicene beliefs. The audience to this particular exchange suddenly asked the bishop: '"Ipse erat, qui contra haereticos tenebrosi Photini contendebat. Quomodo nunc ipse haereticus factus est."' In his own defence, and somewhat skirting the question, the Bishop responded: '"Ego fidem meam exposui Eusebio et manifestavi, et placuit ei."'[33]

Thin evidence, but the three separate testimonies suggest that Eusebius was capable of finding room for theological compromise among the hair-splitting definitions of homoians and homousians alike. Possibly the similar, yet differing, accounts of Eusebius's actions at the council reflect a degree of later ambiguity about whether they were appropriate.[34] Eusebius offered to assent to a heresy,

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[32] 'I remember reading once in some book of Eusebius, a man who was outstanding in all other respects, that the holy spirit did not know the mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ, and I am amazed that a man of such great learning should have cast this stain upon the Holy Spirit'; for 'Ambrosiaster's' text, see *Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti CXXVII*, ed. by A. Souter, CSEL, 50 (Vienna, 1908), pp. 384–85. A. Souter (*A Study of Ambrosiaster* (Cambridge, 1905), pp. 36 and 169) and P. Schepens ('L'Ambrosiastre et Saint Eusèbe de Verceil', *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 37 (1950), 295–99) identify this Eusebius with ours, suggesting that the work Ambrosiaster referred to was the *De Trinitate* attributed to Eusebius (see also above, note 3). Others, such as Harnack and Turner, have suggested Eusebius of Caesarea, while Martini has argued for Eusebius of Emesa: see L. Speller, 'A Note on Eusebius of Vercelli and the Council of Milan', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 36 (1985), 159–60.

[33] *Altercatio Heracliani Laici cum Germanio, Episcopo Sirmiensi*, PL Supplementum, 1, 346. '"This man [whom you interrogate] himself was the one who struggled against the shady heretics of Photinus. How is he now made a heretic himself?" [. . .] "I expounded and revealed my creed to Eusebius, and it was pleasing to him."' That it is our Eusebius is confirmed by the earlier remark: 'Hoc Eusebius ille exiliaticus te docuit, et Hilarius, qui nunc ipse de exilio venit.' On the text, see M. Simonetti, 'Osservazioni sull' *Altercatio Heracliani cum Germinio*', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 21 (1967), 39–58.

[34] Speller, 'Note on Eusebius of Vercelli', pp. 163–64, though not considering the *VE*.

and then used a heretical argument to defeat heretics: this is not a course of action of which hard-liners such as Athanasius or Lucifer of Cagliari would have approved. As we shall see below, Eusebius's actions at the synod of Alexandria (AD 362) and his subsequent conflict with Lucifer may have been interpreted by Lucifer and his disciples in the same light of accommodating heretics when hard lines needed to be drawn between orthodoxy and conciliatory compromises. The differing stories of Hilary, Sulpicius, and Pseudo-Maximus may be considered sympathetic attempts to explain and justify Eusebius's actions, particularly in light of his reputation for sympathy with heretical views, or for welcoming only half-reformed heretics (such as Germinius) back into the fold. It is impossible to say how aware of this legacy our hagiographer was,[35] but his reconstruction of the council in the guise of an ultra-orthodox, papally sanctioned stance against Arian scheming was inspired by more than the conventions of genre and holy-man archetypes, as we shall now see.

Building upon the narrative in the Pseudo-Maximus sermon, the hagiographer borrowed the motif of subordinate signatures to throw the Arians into confusion:

> Vocatus autem Eusebius a Constantio Imperatore ac honorifice susceptus, voluit ut aut minis aut blandimentis vel muneribus flecteretur a vera fide: sed idem Pater Sanctus iam longaevo senio firmus, minas ac blandimenta pro nihilo ducens, et munera illius deputans tanquam stercora, ei consentire noluit, sed coram omnibus dixit: Vos enim dicitis Filium Dei Deo Patri aequalem esse non posse, cur mihi meum filium ac discipulum praetulistis? non est enim discipulus super magistrum, neque filius super patrem.[36]

The result was that the *chirograph*, which Dionysius and twenty-nine other bishops had signed, was brought out and subsequently burned at Eusebius's request: 'novumque si vultis cui subscribere debeam, scribite'.[37] When they brought out a new document, Eusebius pointed out that there were no signatures on it at all,

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[35] The comments in *VE*, 752B are ambiguous.

[36] *VE*, 755D. 'Constantius summoned Eusebius before him and received him with all diplomacy, as he wished to bend Eusebius from the true faith with menace, compliments or gifts. But the holy father stood firm in his old age, taking his threats and compliments for naught, and despising his gifts as though they were shit. He refused to consent to [Constantius] and said in the presence of everyone: "You say that the son of God cannot be equal to God, so then why do you place my son and disciple before me? The disciple cannot be above the teacher, nor can the son be above the father!"'

[37] *VE*, 756B; 'and if you want me to subscribe to a new one, then write it up'.

and how this simply revealed the stupidity of those who ordered this to be written. Constantius had not yet caught on to Eusebius's recalcitrant intentions and reminded him that it was only proper that he sign before all the rest, 'deinde caeteri tuam sequendo honorificent paternitatem'.[38] At this point, Eusebius gave the game away with a speech worthy of the hardiest martyr:

> 'Serpentino more agis, o Imperator, qui lingua lambit, et cauda percutit; sic enim anti-quus hostis primos parentes nostros blandiendo decepit, quos postea in barathri prae-cipitium traxit: non enim ego me vestris sceleribus polluo, neque filium meum Diony-sium caeterisque sodalibus meis vobiscum participare in hac dementia permitto.'[39]

The Emperor was just as insulting back to the holy man:

> 'Inveterate canis, aestimaveram te sancitatis esse virum, sed nunc cognoscimus te esse sacrilegum, magum, atque incantatorem veneficum, plus quippe uno sermone omnes delusisti, quam tota nostra collocutio per decem dies in eis utilitatem fecisset.'[40]

Eusebius simply ricocheted the canine insult back to the Emperor ('"tu cur garrire ausus es ore canino quod tres sint Dii?"'[41]) and called him the Antichrist, behaviour that had the saint promptly carted off by the Arians, beaten half to death, and dragged up and down the stairs until his skull was cracked. At this point the hagiographer seems to have prematurely incorporated his source, the Pseudo-Maximus sermon, for he still had to recount Eusebius's exile in Palestine and involvement in the council of Alexandria before closing with the saint's mar-tyrdom at the hands of a 'saeviens factio Arrianorum'[42] who smashed in his head with rocks.

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[38] *VE*, 756B; 'so that they may follow you in honouring your paternity'.

[39] *VE*, 756A. '"You move like a little snake, o emperor, who tickles with his tongue but stings with his tale. Just as the ancient enemy deceived our ancestors with compliments, and then dragged them down to the pits of hell. But I will not filthy myself with your crimes, nor do I permit my son Dionysius, or any of my other colleagues to participate with you in this madness."'

[40] *VE*, 756B. '"You old dog! And I had thought you were a man of sanctity. But now I know that you're sacrilegious, a magician, a poisonous wizard. With just one speech you have deceived everyone and everything which our entire assembly has been working on for ten days!"'

[41] *VE*, 756 B. '"How do you dare bark like a little dog that there are three Gods?"'

[42] *VE*, 760C; 'a violent mob of Arians'.

A Whole Council Full of Martyrs

But the inclusion of a vicious beating immediately after the council allowed the hagiographer to frame the entire council in terms of a common martyrdom for orthodoxy. For not only does Constantius lament that Eusebius cleverly and so easily had the decree signed by other bishops burned, but he also had the Emperor sent into exile:

> Liberius scilicet Papa Romanus, Hilarius Pictaviensis, Paulinus Treverensis, Lucifer Calaritanus, Dionysius Mediolanensis, aliique pontifices Christi, qui ad hanc convenerant synodum, et quia fuerant cum eo testes Christi, meruerunt sustinere martyrium cum eo. In ipso concilio loris ligati sancti Dei pontifices, et martyres in exilium deportabantur cum Dionysio et Papa Liberio, propter fidei unitatem.[43]

At this point condemnation of the hagiographer and his creation for lack of historical accuracy seems deserved. While the nonsense list of attendees and subsequent exiles was simply taken from his source,[44] we are also informed, prior to the narration of the events at Milan, that Constantius had summoned another council in Rimini where Eusebius was condemned with his followers. This seems a cheap trick: the council of Rimini (AD 359) and its eastern twin Seleucia were Constantius's next great effort to enforce the 'homoian' creed. Despite its initial success, over time the council of Rimini became synonymous with imperial browbeating and Arian trickery. This must have been clear to the hagiographer from the extensive excerpts in the *HT*, if not from other sources.[45] But chronologically switching the councils facilitated literary artistry of parallels and contrasts. Firstly, it further justified Eusebius's feisty behaviour at Milan as a righteous holy man unjustly condemned. Secondly, the legal defence of Athanasius, that he was absent from councils which condemned him, a theme which the hagiographer found in the letters of Eusebius and Pope Liberius, could now be

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[43] *VE*, 757A. 'The Roman Pope Liberius, Hilary of Poitiers, Paulinus of Trier, Lucifer of Cagliari, Dionysius of Milan, and other pontiffs of Christ who were at that synod, because they were witnesses of Christ with [Eusebius], and so with him they deserved to undergo martyrdom. Held down in that council with leather belts, the holy pontiffs of God and martyrs were deported into exile along with Dionysius and Pope Liberius, for the unity of the faith.'

[44] Cassiodorus, *HT*, V.16 (= Theodoret, II, 15) (PL 69: 995A–996D).

[45] *VE*, 754B–D. On the language, see note 46 below. Cf. Cassiodorus, *HT*, V.20–24 (PL 69: 999D–1004C). On Ariminium, see Brennecke, *Homöer*, pp. 23–29; Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 133–35, 144–47, and 285–89; and Williams, *Ambrose*, pp. 11–37. On the homoian creed, see J. N. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London, 1972), pp. 289–91.

applied to Eusebius himself.[46] And thirdly, the author uses the council to juxtapose Eusebius's sanctity with Arian scheming at vacuous, imperially sponsored councils. For while Rimini took place, Eusebius had been thrown out of Vercelli by Arians and was staying 'ad castrum quod dicitur Credonsenium' (Crea) for three months, where he built a church dedicated to Mary[47] and copied out in his own hand the four Gospels (the manuscript's supernatural power is duly noted)[48] before rushing back to Vercelli at the news of the council to ordain Dionsyius, his most outstanding disciple, as prelate of Milan — this last another ahistorical nonsense, but one in perfect harmony with the aims of the *VE* to circumscribe the authority of Milan.

Patently false in historical terms, the hagiographer has merely employed the language of his sources to create an idealized account of the council whereby Milan and Rome are united in Eusebius's suffering for the defence of the faith. The surviving four letters of Liberius to Eusebius from the period leading up to the council of Milan, which the hagiographer undoubtedly knew, merely highlighted the importance of Eusebius's presence at the council, as the Pope virtually pleaded with the Vercellese prelate for his involvement, after the disappointing effort of the papal representatives at Arles.[49]

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[46] *VE*, 752C. The legal terminology is clearly derived from letters of and to Eusebius: see Eusebius of Vercelli, *Epistulae*, 1 (Eusebius to Constantius), ed. by V. Bulhart, CCSL, 9 (Turnhout, 1957), p. 103 ['absentem damnaret'], and the letters found in Bulhart's Appendix IIA: *Ep.* 1 (Council to Eusebius), p. 119 ['excusationem senectutis / gravitatem corporis'], *Ep.* 3 (Constantius to Eusebius), pp. 120–21 and Appendix IIB, *Ep.* 2 (Liberius to Eusebius), p. 122 ['inevitabili causa', etc.]. The third letter, to Gregory of Elvira (*Ep.* 3, p. 110: ed. by Feder in Hilary, *Liber I ad Constantium*, pp. 46–47), was dismissed as a Luciferian forgery by L. Saltet ('La formation de la légende des papes Libère et Félix', *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiatique*, 3.7 (1905), 222–36, and 3.8 (1906), 300–26), but many scholars uphold its authenticity. See, most recently, Williams, *Ambrose*, p. 51, n. 66; *contra* Williams is Simonetti, 'Eusebio', pp. 174–75.

[47] *VE*, 754A; 'at the fortress which is called Credonium'. This is the earliest mention of the sanctuary at Crea, north of Monferrato, hence a possible key to dating the *VE*. Later legends attribute the statue of Mary there to Eusebius bringing it back from exile: see F. Maccono, *Il Santuario di Nostra Signora di Crea nel Monferrato* (Casale, 1951), pp. 15–18. The stay at Crea also justifies Eusebius's delay in attending the council.

[48] *VE,* 754A, undoubtedly referring to the *Codex Vercellensis* preserved at the city's Biblioteca Capitolare: Vercelli, BC, s.n. (*CLA*, IV, 467).

[49] *Ep.* 2 (ed. by Bulhart, Appendix IIB), p. 122. Cf. the similar praise by Luficer of Cagliari, *Ep.* 2 (Appendix IIA), p. 120.

The chronology of the allusive and elliptic letters was probably no clearer to our hagiographer than it is to modern historians,[50] but he used them nonetheless to plot his narrative. Before his account of the council he quoted Eusebius's reply to Constantius's summons in full, allowing the saint's own prophetic words to build the narrative tension: '"hoc necessarium duxi, ut Mediolanum venire properarem. Quicquid autem domine imperator in praesenticum venero iustum fueirt visum, et Deo placitum"'.[51] In turn, the letters of Liberius helped the hagiographer to cast Eusebius in the role of martyr for orthodoxy, complementing the blood and gore of the Pseudo-Maximus sermon. For Liberius explicitly encouraged Eusebius to incur the wrath of imperial power for greater rewards:

> 'Quantam denique gloriam fueritis consecuti, hinc magis scire potestis, quod, si qui in persecutione coronati sunt, solius persecutoris cruentos gladios sentire potuerunt, contra vos, devoti per omnia dei milites, etiam falsos fratres inimicos experti victoriam de perfidis pertulistis, quorum quantumque in saeculo violentia increscere potuit, tanto sacerdotibus praemia laudis inveniuntur conferre. Estote itaque de promissione caelesti securi.'[52]

Liberius was not alone in the use of this kind of language: Athanasius, Hilary, and Lucifer all in varying degrees employed the language of 'persecution' to describe their plight and exile. Eusebius was no exception. In his long letter to his suffragan clergy from exile, which the hagiographer knew (see below), Eusebius went to great lengths to qualify his imprisonment and his isolation from his own clergy as a type of persecution:

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[50] Williams, *Ambrose*, pp. 53–58, and Appendix I–II, pp. 237–38, proposes a different chronology for the letters. Rather than reading them as pleas by Liberius and the papal legates for Eusebius's attendance after the council had already begun (as is strongly suggested by the letter of Constantius to Eusebius (*Ep.* 3, ed. by Bulhart, Appendix IIA, pp. 120–21), and that of Eusebius to Constantius (*Ep.* 3, p. 103) included in the *VE*), Williams suggests that Eusebius attended the council from its beginnings, but then left after upsetting the proceedings (in the manner described by Hilary, *Liber I ad Constantium*, ed. by Feder, II.3, p. 187; see above note 23) to return to Vercelli, whither most of the correspondence reached him. The interpretation is vehemently opposed by Simonetti, 'Eusebio', pp. 170–72, with whom I tend to agree here.

[51] *VE*, 754D. '"I understand it is necessary that I hasten to come to Milan. And I promise that when I come, Lord Emperor, I shall do whatever seems right to me and pleasing to God."'

[52] *Ep.* 4, ed. by Bulhart, Appendix IIB, p. 124. '"As much as you will be followed in glory, you should know even more that those who were crowned in persecution often enough could feel the bloody swords of the persecutor. So then you also, devoted soldiers of God in everything, will achieve victory against the depravity of false brothers and enemies who oppose you. As much as they increase their violence in this world, the more the reward of praise is found to be conferred on bishops. Be assured, therefore, of the heavenly promise."'

Videte, sanctissimi fratres, si non est persecutio, dum haec patimur, qui fidem catholi-
cam custodimus, et altius cogitate, num valde etiam deterior sit quam illa, quae fiebat
per hos, qui idolis serviebant! Illi mittebant in carcerem, non tamen prohibebant ad se
venire suos. Quantum ergo satanas ecclesias vulneraverit per Ariomanitarum.[53]

Using the model of martyrdom to describe murder by fellow Christians of a
different Christological persuasion was not the easiest narrative framework to
use, but these were the terms used by the hagiographer's own subject. For Euse-
bius, as much as Liberius, Lucifer, and Hilary, it was a short step, ideologically
as well as rhetorically, from safeguarding the faith of the martyrs to assuming the
status of martyr for doing so.[54] They thought of themselves as weathering a
persecution worthy of earlier days, on a par with the original martyrs. Ambrose
seems to have qualified this a little when he drew a distinction between his
hapless predecessor at Milan, Dionysius, and Eusebius: both were exiled, but
Dionysius's death in exile warranted his martyr status, whereas Eusebius, because
he returned, 'levavit vexillum confessionis'.[55]

But the author's artistry did not stop there. Having already established Euse-
bius's impeccable Roman origins at the very start of the *VE* by describing the
saint's infancy and sanctuary at Rome during the Diocletian persecutions, his
baptism from Pope Eusebius (whence the saint supposedly took the name), his
service as *lector* in the church during the pontificate of Sylvester, and his ordina-
tion (at age fifty) by Pope Mark,[56] the hagiographer craftily depicted Eusebius's

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[53] *Ep.* 2, ed. by Bulhart, p. 108. 'See, most holy brothers, is this not a persecution which we
who guard the Catholic faith are suffering, think a little more on whether this is worse than
the persecution instigated by those who were in the service of idols! They may have put people
in prison, but at least allowed them visitors. How badly Satan will wound the church through
the cruelty of the Ariomanics.'

[54] Hilary, *Liber in Constantium Imperatorem* (*Contra Constantium*), ed. by A. Rocher,
Contre Constance, SC, 334 (Paris, 1987), I.1, p. 168. Likewise, Lucifer of Cagliari, *De Athanasio*,
ed. by G. F. Diercks, CCSL, 8 (Turnhout, 1978), I.5, p. 9. Lucifer made much of the motif (see
also I.11, p. 20; I.39, p. 67; I.40, p. 70) as did his disciples in chapter 8 of their *Liber Precum*
when describing Lucifer's exile (PL 13: 88D).

[55] Ambrose, *Ep.* 14, extra collectionem, ed. by Zelzer, III, 273; 'bore the standard of a
confessor'.

[56] *VE*, 751C, noting that Eusebius was fifty years old and hinting at a scriptural parallel (Ex.
28. 1–5, 30. 22–25, Num. 3–4), taken from Isidore, *Quaestiones de veteri et novo testamento,* XII.9
(PL 83: 343C). Saxer doubts that Eusebius was ordained priest at all on the grounds that
Jerome would have mentioned it in the *De viris illustribus*: 'Fonti', p. 147. It is difficult to
imagine that Eusebius *lector* would have been appointed as Bishop of Vercelli without ordina-

appointment to Vercelli as a mission to destroy Arianism by papal command, a commission accepted by Eusebius with a martyr's defiance:

> [Iulius] sciscitans ab eo utrum talari tunica vestitus fuisset, sicut B. Joseph, id est, fidem rectam usque ad mortem servare decrevisset? At vero S. Eusebius fortis fide, et alacris facie, constanter respondit, ante mortem corporis se sustinere velle, quam fidem rectam mutare.[57]

The Authority of Milan

Looking back from the late sixth century or later, treating Milan's heretical past was no easy matter, and the hagiographer had the difficult task of explaining how not only Italy, but the entire West, was saved from error by a neighbouring saint who came before Ambrose, indeed a saint who made Ambrose possible.[58] Papal consecration and a papally sanctioned mission certainly boosted Eusebius's credentials to rescue northern Italy, which in the *VE* becomes the main battle-field for a conflict of worldwide proportions. Setting the stage for Eusebius's rescue of not just Italy but the entire Latin world, the hagiographer combined the genres of *laus civitatis* and ecclesiastical history and paired Eusebius with Athanasius as the two leading lights of the times, while making it clear that Milan was no more than a subordinate, neighbouring city:

> Eodem tempore Vercellis civitas Liguriarum primatum inter caeteras urbes retinebat; postea primatum Mediolanum obtinuit. Sacratus autem stola pontificali a Julio summo

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tion as priest first, though Ambrose's own appointment is a sharp reminder that considerations other than the dictates of canon law determined episcopal appointments. Eusebius's direct appointment and consecration by the pope in the *VE* certainly reeks of anachronism, but Ambrose's description of Eusebius ('Quem numquam ante cognoverant, posthabitis civibus, simul et viderunt et probaverunt, quem omnis eligit ecclesia [. . .] quem omnes postulavissent': *Ep*. 14, extra collectionem, ed. by Zelzer, III, 273) suggests Eusebius was indeed an outsider. On the other hand, the Milanese prelate might be reading his own, highly irregular, election into that of Eusebius sixty years earlier.

[57] *VE*, 751C. '[Pope Julian] then asked him whether he was prepared to be clothed in the talaric tunic, just like the blessed Joseph, that is, cloaked in the correct faith, and further asked whether he would stand steadfast unto death and oblivion. Saint Eusebius, so strong in his faith, responded with a smile on his face that he would rather suffer death of the body than deviate from the correct belief.'

[58] See L. Cracco Ruggini, 'Vercelli e Milano: nessi politici e rapporti ecclesiali nel IV–V secolo', in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 91–120.

pontifice, ad destruendam memoratum haeresim Vercellis dirigitur, a qua peste non solum urbem, sed totum liberavit orbem. Erat autem Vercellis nobilissima civitas opibus faecunda, arboribus ac vineis nemorosa, pascuis uberrima, aquis salubribus irrigua, sed Arriana peste faedata: in qua urbe S. Eusebius pontificalem tenuit sedem [. . .] verum etiam sapienter vicinarum civitatum ordinationes rectas in episcopis peragens, civitatibus fidem omnibus tribuebat: tunc enim rite sub tanto pastore sua civitas primatum tenebat, quae se, et alias circumcirca vicinas urbes verae salutis unitatem fidei pascebat [. . .] ita invidia diaboli inflammatum est cor Constantii imperatoris adversus memoratum sanctissimum virum Eusebium, necnon et Athanasium Alexandrinum episcopum, qui uterque pro defensione Catholicae fidei die noctuque insistebant: unus regens partes orientalium, alter vero occidentalium.[59]

As we have seen, Eusebius's metropolitan status is also sounded in the rescue of the hapless Dionysius: he is repeatedly termed the (baptismal) *filius* of Eusebius, his lapse at the council of Milan had so wounded Eusebius and his colleagues that they were moved to tears and is explained as coercion, and their reconciliation scene is one of pure pathos: as Eusebius approached Milan to attend the council, Dionysius rushed out of the city to greet him, a copy of the Gospels in his hand, and threw himself at Eusebius's feet pleading 'Pater peccavi libera me si vales'.[60] The point is made clear: Dionysius's redemption is entirely dependent upon Eusebius, just as Milan's orthodoxy is entirely owed to Vercelli.

The *VE*'s claim that Eusebius ordained Dionysius 'in place of Auxentius' who had been 'justly condemned [. . .] since he refused to believe in the unity of the Trinity' is one of the text's more inexcusable, ahistorical pieces of nonsense: Auxentius's long and highly successful archbishopric (AD 355–74) began with

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[59] *VE*, 751–52A. 'At this time the city of Vercelli held the primacy among the other cities of Liguria. It was later that Milan gained the primacy. Consecrated in the pontifical stole by Julius highest of pontiffs, [Eusebius] was sent to destroy the said heresy at Vercelli. And from this pest he liberated not only the city, but the entire world. For Vercelli was the noblest of cities, wealthy in its riches, replete with orchards and vineyards, luscious pastureland, irrigated by wholesome waters, but filthied by the Arian pestilence. In this town Eusebius held the pontifical chair [. . .] prudently performing sound ordinations of bishops in neighbouring cities, he thereby endowed the faith in all these cities. For back then under this pastor his city held the primacy by canonical rite, so it nourished all the neighbouring cities thereabouts in the unity of faith and true salvation [. . .]. And so the heart of Constantius the emperor was inflamed with devil's envy towards the most holy man Eusebius as well as Athanasius the bishop of Alexandria, since both persisted night and day in their defence of the Catholic faith. One governed the east, the other the west.'

[60] *VE*, 754B–C, 755B. 'Father, I have sinned, free me if you can.' Implied coercion, *VE*, 755A–C: Dionysius's capitulation took place while Hilary and Lucifer were in jail and before Liberius and 'Catholic men' arrived.

Dionysius's condemnation at the council of Milan alongside Eusebius.[61] But like the Church he governed, Auxentius of Milan needed careful literary treatment. We know from Auxentius himself (as transmitted by Hilary) that both Hilary and Eusebius worked to oust the Arian bishop from his see once they had returned from exile.[62] They were spectacularly unsuccessful, and Auxentius outlived them both, as well as two supportive emperors, as metropolitan authority in Italy for nineteen years, an archbishopric terminated only by his death, which resulted in the surprising election of the catechumen and provincial governor Ambrose. It is not difficult to read between the lines of Hilary's near hysterical hatred (he called him the Antichrist) to see that Auxentius could find room for artful compromise and struck a delicate balance between placating a determined emperor and an opinionated, divided Milanese clergy.[63] In order to cast Auxentius as an evil, noxious presence in Italy and to justify Eusebius's supposed ordination of Dionysius, the narrative of the *VE* is emplotted to deploy the theme of righteous vengeance: Auxentius had sent Arian thugs to prevent people from entering the church at Vercelli as soon as Eusebius arrived to take up his new post.[64] In the diagesis of the *VE*, Auxentius's legitimacy as a metropolitan authority in Italy was completely undermined by Eusebius's failure to recognize it, though some concession to Auxentius's continued presence appears towards the end of the *VE*, when the *vicarius* of Milan, Serenus, sent a delegation to Eusebius to ask him to come to Milan: 'Auxentius vero Arrianorum sectator, Mediolanensium episcopus eiectus est a Catholicis viris de civitate, et seditione quadam peremptus.'[65]

Alexandria, Antioch, and the Problem with Lucifer

If the authority of neighbouring Milan required artistry and tact in the construction of an 'alternate history', Eusebius's role at the synods at Alexandria and

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[61] *VE*, 752C.

[62] Hilary, *Exemplum blasphemiae Auxentii*, PL 10: 616B.

[63] Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 22–31, is a good account of Auxentius that counters Hilary's bias, though it may go too far in the opposite direction by stressing Auxentius's popular support.

[64] *VE*, 754C. For obstruction, see *VE*, 754A.

[65] *VE*, 759D; 'now that Auxentius, the bishop of Milan who adhered to Arianism, has been thrown out of the city by catholic men, and was killed in some scuffle'.

Antioch (AD 362), which received more attention in the 'chronicles and histories' consulted by the hagiographer, was treated with a different literary strategy of distraction and omission. Emperor Julian was the distraction: the hagiographer devoted as much space to his reign and apostasy as to the events at Alexandria and Antioch.[66] The omission was the lamentable conflict between Eusebius and his fellow exile, Lucifer of Cagliari, at Antioch, when Eusebius arrived fresh from the synod of Alexandria with a mandate to heal the rift between the different Nicene factions squabbling over the legitimacy of their respective episcopal candidates.[67] The narrative histories of Rufinus, Sulpicius, and the *HT* all record that Lucifer, who did not attend at Alexandria, only made matters worse by ordaining a new bishop, Paulinus, which completely destroyed Eusebius's diplomatic attempts to unite the different factions. Rufinus reports that Eusebius left in shame and indignation without granting his communion to either party, but the *HT*, the hagiographer's direct source, focused instead on the anger and arrogance of Lucifer: 'Verum Lucifer sentiens non suscipere Eusebium eius ordinationem, hoc putavit iniuriosum, ac vehementer irascebatur, et communicare declinabat Eusebio.'[68] These historians described the whole episode in terms of sadness and a loss for the Church.[69]

Petty squabbles between bishops were hardly the stuff of ideal holy-man typologies, and a disastrous fallout between old friends who had endured so much together was a sad ending to an otherwise triumphant tale. The *VE* side-steps the entire episode by having Lucifer arrive at Alexandria and immediately depart on good terms with both Athanasius and Eusebius who sent him to Antioch, 'ut ecclesias confirmaret de consubstantialitate divinitatis'.[70] Paulinus's

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[66] *VE*, 758C–D and 759A–B. Medical metaphors link the two chapters/subjects: Julian was 'quasi pius medicus' and 'falsus medicus' who spread infection: Eusebius operated 'ad instar optimi medici', curing those poisoned, etc.

[67] A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IVᵉ siècle (328–373)*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome, 219 (Rome, 1996), pp. 542–48, 556–64, 604–10; C. B. Armstrong, 'The Synod of Alexandria and the Schism at Antioch in AD 362', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 22 (1921), 206–21, 347–55; Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 156–58.

[68] Cassiodorus, *HT*, VI.23 (PL 69: 1045D). 'When Lucifer saw that Eusebius did not accept his ordination (of Paulinus), he thought this was insulting, and he began to be extremely angry, and so declined to communion with Eusebius.'

[69] For example, Cassiodorus, *HT*, VI.23 (= Socrates III, 7) (PL 69: 1045C–1046A); cf. Rufinus, *HE*, I.30 (PL 21: 500B–D).

[70] *VE*, 758D; 'where he was to ensure that the churches acknowledged the divinity's consubstantiality'.

ordination is noted as a result of Lucifer 'divisiones sanans ecclesiae Antiochenae', no conflict is recorded, and Lucifer simply 'ad propria regressus est',[71] apparently without, as the narrative histories have it, founding a new heresy. As mentioned above, the various accounts of Eusebius's extravagant behaviour at Milan may have been, at least in part, addressing his reputation for compromise with heretics or heretical views, an idea particularly repugnant to Lucifer, who refused to acknowledge even the conditional pardon to erring bishops as recommended by Athanasius and Eusebius at the synod of Alexandria.[72] It has to be admitted that there appears to be no trace of hostility towards Eusebius in Lucifer's extant writings: most predate his schism with Eusebius, but it seems significant that there is no mention of Eusebius at all. Lucifer's disciples, Faustinus and Marcellinus, in their apologetic *Liber precum*, staunchly defended their hard-line stance against *praevaricatores* and *praevaricationes* towards Arian doctrines,[73] but they also omitted entirely any mention of Antioch and their *magister*'s disastrous intervention there. It was an episode both Eusebius and Lucifer, and their respective admirers, would rather have forgotten. The hagiographer, however, did fire one quick Parthian shot at Lucifer: he claimed that Eusebius secured the release of Lucifer from prison at Milan by direct petition to the Emperor.[74]

The Problem with Hilary

Another notable omission in the *VE* is any information on Eusebius's collaboration with Hilary of Poitiers, who barely gets a mention as one of those exiled at Milan. Again we can see the hagiographer's editorial process, for the *HT* (Socrates) recorded the two men's work together after Eusebius's return to the West (*c.* 363), but drew a less-than-flattering comparison between them:

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[71] *VE*, 758D; 'healing the divisions of the Antiochene church' and 'returned to his own see'.

[72] Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie,* pp. 604–05.

[73] *Liber Precum*, prefatio, (PL 13: 81A), VI (PL 13: 88A). Cf. Lucifer, *De Athanasio*, ed. by Diercks, II.1, pp. 77–78. Jerome reminded them of their *magister*'s treatment of Eusebius (Jerome, *Dialogus contra Luciferianos*, XX, PL 23: 175B). On Lucifer's legacy and works, see L. Boyle, 'The Basilicanus of Hilary Revisted', in *Scribi e colofoni: Le sottoscrizioni di copisti dalle origini all'avvento della stampa*, ed. by E. Condello and G. De Gregorio (Spoleto, 1995), pp. 93–105.

[74] *VE*, 755D.

Uterque ergo fortiter in fide laboraverunt. Sed Hilarius tanquam disertus suis libris satisfactionem de Trinitatis consubstantialitate conscripsit. Quibus hoc sufficienter exposuit, et vehementer Arianorum dogma destruxit.[75]

Socrates was merely following Rufinus, who was even more impressed with Hilary's efforts. Although both men 'velut magnifica quaedam mundi lumina, Illyricum, Italiam, Galliasque suo splendore radiarunt', Hilary published:

Nisi quod Hilarius vir natura lenis et placidus, simulque eruditus, et ad persuadendum commodissimus, rem diligentius et aptius procurabat. Qui etiam libros de fide nobiliter scriptos edidit, quibus et haereticorum versutias, et nostrorum deceptiones, et male credulam simplicitatem ita dilgenter exposuit, ut et praesentes, et longe positos, quibus ipse per se disserere viva voce non poterat, perfectissima instructione corrigeret.[76]

For the scholarly and well-travelled Rufinus, Hilary was the real hero because his writing influenced those beyond his immediate circumstances, and he thus contributed to the body of patristic literature which safeguarded the faith, just as Rufinus had done his whole life.[77] Hilary may also have snubbed Eusebius.[78] It is doubtful that the hagiographer knew Rufinus's or Hilary's work, but the *VE*

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[75] Cassiodorus, *HT*, VI.24 (= Socrates III, 8) (PL 69: 1046A–B). 'Both these men worked hard for the faith. But Hilary was so learned in his books that his writing completely settled the matter of the consubstantiality of the Trinity. He set this out so well, that he utterly destroyed the beliefs of the Arians.'

[76] Rufinus, *HE*, I.31 (PL 21: 501B); trans. by P. R. Amidon, *The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia, Books Ten and Eleven* (Oxford, 1997), p. 38: *like two great lights of the world, lit up Illyricum, Italy and Gaul with their brightness [. . .] the only difference [between Eusebius and Hilary] was that Hilary, a man naturally gentle and peaceful and at the same time learned and most adept at persuasion, was achieving his purpose more carefully and skillfully. For Hilary also published some excellent books in which he so carefully expounded both the cunning of the heretics and the way in which our people had been deceived and their unfortunate gullibility, that with his faultless teaching he corrected both those with him and those far off whom he could not address in person.'*

[77] G. Fedalto, 'Rufino di Concordia: Elementi di una biografia', *Antichità altoadriatiche*, 39 (1992), 19–44; F. Thelamon, 'Rufin historien de son temps', *Antichità altoadriatiche*, 31 (1987), 41–59. F. X. Murphy, *Rufinus of Aquileia (345–411): His Life and Works* (Washington, DC, 1945).

[78] For the amount of extant writings, Hilary seems noticeably silent on Eusebius, although he noted him as 'vir omni vita Deo serviens' in the *Liber I ad Constantium*, ed. by Feder, II.3, pp. 186–87 (cited above, note 23) and also in the *Liber in Constantium Imperatorem* (*Contra Constantium*), ed. by Rocher, I.2, p. 172, as one of the *viri sancti* exiled by Constantius. It is through Hilary's writings that we learn of Auxentius's complaint that the two bishops were working against him: *Exemplum blasphemiae Auxentii*, PL 10: 617B.

seems to be responding to the eclipse of Eusebius's reputation among his other sources in favour of the Bishop of Poitiers.[79] As we have seen, only two of the 'martyrs' exiled at the council of Milan, Pope Liberius and Dionysius of Milan, were granted a role in the *VE*, allowing the hagiographer to build an 'axis of orthodoxy' between Rome and northern Italy in the person of Eusebius. Hilary, and Eusebius's collaboration with him after his return to the West, was a distraction that dimmed Eusebius's star. It is no wonder, then, that in the *VE*, when Eusebius returns to Rome from Egypt and Syria, the Pope signed a decree conceding to Eusebius, and to Eusebius alone, 'monarchia [. . .] in Europae finibus terrarum'.[80]

Documents and Hagiology

This supposed document confirming Eusebius's *monarchia* over the west was in all probability the *Epistula Catholica*, the synodical letter of the council of Alexandria, of which only the opening section survives, having once been relegated to the *spuria* of Athanasius's writings, and only fairly recently reclaimed as a genuine historical document.[81] No other source besides the *VE* mentions Eusebius's return to Rome, his presentation of the *Epistula Catholica* to Pope Liberius, or the subsequent papal endorsement of Eusebius's authority in the West. A recent, careful consideration of the events of this period concluded that 'It is [. . .] very likely, despite the silence of our sources, that Eusebius met with Liberius at Rome [. . .]. He may have possessed a letter from the synod for Liberius.'[82] But the *VE* explicitly records this very event, adding that Eusebius

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[79] Compare also Jerome, *De viris illustribus*, C (PL 23: 699B–701A), admiringly listing Hilary's works in an entry three times longer than that for Eusebius. Note also that Gregory of Tours, despite devoting a chapter to Eusebius's cult, qualified Eusebius as 'magnu[s . . .] Hilario adiutoriu[s] contra haereses fuit': Gregory of Tours, *Gloria confessorum*, ed. by Arndt and Krusch, III, p. 750.

[80] *VE*, 759B; 'absolute authority over all of Europe'.

[81] M. Tetz, 'Ein enzyklishes Schreiben der Synode von Alexandrien (362)', *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 79 (1988), 262–81 (for edition pp. 271–74). Although it contains no trace of Eusebius's involvement, and no Latin recension has come down to us, it would be unwise to conclude that our hagiographer did not have a translation, or the epitome of such, to hand.

[82] Williams, *Ambrose*, p. 67. Liberius's letter, ed. by Feder, in Hilary, *Liber I ad Constantium*, pp. 156–57.

placed the profession of his faith 'Romae in sacro scrinio', a detail which has been dismissed as *un invenzione gratuita* on the part of the hagiographer.[83] Yet given the *VE*'s incorporation of documents here as elsewhere, the hagiographer's claims should not be dismissed too quickly.

The same problem of historical reliability and (now) lost documents confronts us when we consider (again) the *VE*'s account of the council at Milan. The *VE* records that Dionsyius and another twenty-nine bishops made the mistake of subscribing to the condemnation of Athanasius at the commencement of the council. Baronius claimed to have consulted a (now lost) document in the archives at Vercelli which contained a list of those bishops who subscribed against Athanasius at Milan: it contained thirty names, among which was Dionysius's. It would seem that our hagiographer knew this same document and, as we have seen, he knew and used the correspondence of Eusebius from the same archives, though none of it survives today outside the respective *Vitae* of Eusebius and the transcriptions made by Johannes Stephano Ferrero, Bishop of Vercelli, and Baronius, both around the end of the sixteenth century.[84]

The *VE*'s fidelity to documents, then, forces us to reconsider yet another of its claims previously ignored by historians, namely that when Eusebius finally attended the council at Milan, a statement of the Nicene creed

> Perlecta autem in medio hanc exclamaverunt veram fidem et Apostolicam atque Catholicam; cui omnes firmando subscripserunt, approbantes Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum verum Dominum esse, et unius substantiae cum Patre, quod graece dicitur homousion. Subscripsit autem primus huic fidei Eusebius dicens: Ego Eusebius episcopus civitatis Vercellensium, hanc fidem expositam a Patribus nostris, et approbo et teneo; et qui huic fidei non consenserit, alienum ab ecclesia catholica pronuncio et judico.[85]

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[83] *VE* 759B; 'in the holy archives at Rome'. Saxer, 'Fonti', p. 151. The only scholar even to consider the *VE*'s account of Eusebius's commission from Liberius regarding the dissemination of the *Epistula Catholica* is M. Wojtowytsch, *Papsttum und Konzile von den Anfängen bis zu Leo I (440–461)* (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 127, but note Tetz, 'Ein enzyklishes Schreiben', pp. 269–79.

[84] C. Baronius, *Annales ecclesiastici,* 37 vols (Guerin, 1863–87), IV (1865), col. 537; Stephano Ferrero, *Sancti Eusebii Vercellensis episcopi et martyris eius(que) in episcopatu successorum vita et res gestae* (Rome, 1602), p. 49.

[85] *VE*, 755B–D; 'was read out before all, and they proclaimed the true apostolic and Catholic faith. They then all signed the statement, affirming that our Lord Jesus Christ was the true Lord, of one substance with the Father, which in Greek is called *homoousion*. Eusebius was the first to sign and affirm this creed, saying: "I, Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli, approve of and hold this creed as set out by our fathers, and whosoever does not consent to this creed, I

We are further informed that Eusebius, Dionysius, 'and another forty-eight bishops signed also'.[86] No such document survives, and no other sources mention this event. As we have seen, Hilary's account of the council lends support to this scenario, but differed considerably: according to him, Eusebius presented the creed and Dionysius alone only half-signed it before it was snatched from his hands and the council retired to the palace. Did the hagiographer invent this scenario, and a subscription to boot? The term *homoousios* was the indeed the key formulation of the Nicene creed, as emphasized by Athanasius in his *On the Council of Nicea* (*c*. 352) which he sent to Pope Liberius and which became a 'potent rallying-cry' in the West around the time of Eusebius's condemnation at Milan.[87] Our hagiographer already used the term at the opening of the *VE* when providing the historical setting, juxtaposing Constantine's conversion and the birth of Jerome with the condemnation of Arius at Nicea, where 'declaratum est homousion, sicut scripturae referunt' — a worrying qualification if the hagiographer was a cleric. The hagiographer then and there in the *VE* provided a statement of orthodox faith which had possibly been cobbled together from the *De trinitate* attributed to Eusebius.[88] Moreover, the hagiographer may have had before him a model for Eusebius's subscription to the *Tomus ad Antiochenos*,[89] the document issued by the subcommittee at Alexandria to resolve the schism at

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judge and decree to be alien to the Catholic church."' The text here seems corrupt and is confusing. 'Ventum est autem Mediolanum, et recipientes se in hospitio tractabant de ereptione eiusdem Episcopi Dionysi; postera autem die supervenerunt omnes episcopi in ecclesiam Mediolanensem; et residente Papa Liberio cum caeteris catholicis episcopis numero trecentis decem, et octo catholicis. Perlecta autem in medio hanc exclamaverunt veram fidem et Apostolicam atque Catholicam; cui omnes firmando subscripserunt.' This suggests that 318 bishops attended Milan, but this makes little sense for what follows. Scribal error is the most likely culprit. On the Nicene number as topos, see H. Chadwick, 'Les 318 Pères de Nicée', *Revue Histoire Ecclesiastique*, 61 (1966), 808–11.

[86] Gent, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS 244 reads 'numero quadraginta': 'Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum Bibliothecae Publicae civitatis et academiae Gandavensis', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 3 (1884), 173.

[87] Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 111–13; G. C. Stead, 'Homoousios', *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 16 (1992), 364–443. The term is not used in the surviving correspondence of Eusebius.

[88] *VE*, 751A–B; 'homousion was declared, just as the scriptures say'; compare with *De S. Trinitate Confessio*, I and IV (PL 12: 959A and 961A).

[89] *Tomus ad Antiochenos*, IX.3–X.4. (PG 26: 796–809); Armstrong, 'Synod of Alexandria', 206–21, 347–55; and Barnes, *Athanasius*, pp. 156–58.

Antioch. Eusebius's subscription to the *Tomus* is much longer, stresses the authority of Nicea, and strives to describe the Trinity in strictly Nicene formulation. The *Tomus* subscription does not contain the term *homoousion*,[90] but the main body of both the *Tomus* and the *Epistula Catholica* certainly did, as it was the touchstone term advocated by Athanasius for previously erring but now repentant bishops who wished to return to the fold of orthodoxy. The text of the subscription to the *Tomus* was certainly preserved at Vercelli, as Ferrero's transcription attests, though how early we cannot say. Our hagiographer makes no explicit mention of it.

The Milanese subscription given in the *VE* therefore raises some important questions about both Eusebius's career and the hagiographer's methods. Did the hagiographer have access to documents, now lost, that attest to Eusebius's and other bishops' signatures on a copy of the Nicene creed? Was this the same document which Eusebius then presented to the Arian bishops and which they snatched from Dionysius's hand, as Hilary reports? If the hagiographer did use the *De trinitate* for Eusebius's statement of faith, why did he not mention that Eusebius wrote such a work, and how early was the work attributed to Eusebius? To ignore the *VE* as historical evidence, as has been customary, is to avoid questions well worth asking.

Dear Patrophilus

Given that the question of authenticity hovers over Eusebius's 'subscription' at Milan, what are we to make of the other documents preserved in the *VE*? Unlike the correspondence between Eusebius and Constantius, and that between Eusebius and Liberius, which come down to us through the transcriptions of Baronius from (now lost) documents 'ex archivo ecclesiae Vercellensi',[91] the letter of Eusebius to his 'dilectissimis fratribus et satis desideratissimis presbyteris'[92] in Vercelli, Novara, Ivrae, and Dertona, which contains Eusebius's own *Libellus ad*

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[90] *Tomus ad Antiochenos* X.2 (PG 26: 807). This text differs slightly from that in Ferrero, *Sancti Eusebii*, p. 49, given in Saxer, 'Fonti', pp. 125–26.

[91] 'from the archive of the church of Vercelli'. Baronius seldom qualifies *archivum*: eg. 'ex archivo Vercell. editae cum actis vitae S. Eusebii' (*Annales*, I (1864), 533, n. 2), suggesting a dossier on Eusebius?; and 'accepimus nuper a Joanne Stephano Ferrerio episcopo Vercellensi, ex archivio eius ecclesiae' (*Annales*, I, 534); or admits he has tampered with the evidence: 'ex archivo Vercellensis ecclesiae, mendis quantum licuit, expurgatas' (*Annales*, I, 534).

[92] 'most beloved brothers and most missed priests'.

Patrophilum, was transmitted solely via hagiography. It was first published by Mombritius in his *Sanctuarium* (*ante* AD 1480), where it is found already incorporated into an epitome of the *VE* (*BHL* 2751). Exactly where Mombritius found this text is unclear, but it seems to have inspired a chain of antiquarian transcriptions of the letter, including that of Baronius, none giving any further clue as to how the letter was preserved originally.[93] There seems little reason to doubt the authenticity of the *Libellus ad Patrophilum*, though we might be wary of Eusebius's own exaggerations. We know from Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403) that Patrophilus was indeed Arian bishop at Scythopolis, a man 'very influential because of his wealth and severity and his familiar acquaintance with the emperor Constantius'. Epiphanius attests to Eusebius's presence in Scythopolis also, for he says the saint was staying at the estate of Josephus, a Jew from Tiberias who had converted to Christianity and was the 'only' orthodox Christian in an otherwise Arian city, protected only by his rank of count, granted to him by Emperor Constantine. Epiphanius 'and the other brethren had come there to visit him [Josephus], and we were entertained too, along with Eusebius'.[94]

This is not quite the picture we get from Eusebius in the *Libellus*: he was dragged naked and supine to a *hospitium*, and then to an even smaller cell, where he has been denied visitations from his own clergy (*fratres mei*); in protest he went on hunger strike, refused to take even bread and water, but not without warning Patrophilus that he will be unable to lie and say that Eusebius voluntarily sought death, for Eusebius had secretly sent letters to churches around the world about his treatment, ensuring that Patrophilus and his agents will be charged with homicide.[95] After quoting his *Libellus ad Patrophilum* in full, Eusebius again

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[93] For the Mombritius text of the *Libellus,* see *Sanctuarium*, I, 462. The Solesme monks, who revised Mombritius in 1910, note that the *Vita* was 'ex Legenda Aurea sumpta est' (*Sanctuarium*, I, 662) which they collated with the edition of Graesse (1861); they collated the letter with the edition of Gallandi: *Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum antiquorumque scriptorum ecclesiasticorum*, ed. by Andreas Gallandi, 14 vols (Venice, 1765–81), V (1768), 78–80 (repr. in PL 12: 947–54). But as with Baronius's edition (Baronius, *Annales*, IV, *s.a.* 356, XCII–CIII, p. 571, see n. 1), Gallandi's edition relies on that of A. Lipomanus, *Sanctorum priscorum patrum Vitae*, 8 vols (Venice, 1551–60), IV (1554), fols 187–89, who in turn took it from Mombritius.

[94] For the original Greek text, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, ed. by Karl Holl, in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (Lepizig, 1915), I.5.1, p. 159. The translation here it that by F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, 2 vols (Leiden, 1987), I, 123.

[95] The force of Eusebius's threat hangs on public accountability and exposure: *Ep*. 2, ed. by Bulhart, p. 106. References to prison conditions match slightly later laws (*Theodosiani libri*

addresses the north Italian clergy to provide more details of his sufferings: after some reprieve for twenty-five days, he was locked up again, repeatedly denied food for days on end, and his clergy were imprisoned and exiled, but he managed to slip this letter secretly to his deacon Sirus, who was by chance visiting holy sites in the area.[96]

The hagiographer certainly knew and used this *dilectissima* letter to the clergy,[97] though found much more compelling material in the sermons at his disposal on the cramped and cruel conditions of Eusebius's *saevissmum ergastulum*, upon which the *VE* then elaborates.[98] But while his borrowing from the letter to the clergy was minimal, the hagiographer inserts into his narrative an extremely truncated copy (to about one third) of the *Libellus ad Patrophilem*. The *VE*'s version is brief enough to give in full. Lines taken directly from the longer *Libellus* in Mombritius are indicated in italics:

> *Servus Dei Eusebius cum conservis suis, Patrophilo custodi cum suis.* Rapuerunt me Arriomanitae, et *vi multorum* nimio *furore nudato corpore* me *supinum* de cavea hospitioli per terram traxerunt, meque in hospitio alio clausum tenent. neque *panem manducaturum neque aquam bibiturum* profitentur, quo usque consentiam illis: quare opportunum est mihi ante *de corpore exire*, quam ista consentire. Videte quia *contra ius divinum*, *ac publicum commistis* iam sunt enim septem dies, et nisi hoc emendaveritis, *eritis* procul dubio *homicidae.*[99]

XVI cum constitutionibus sirmondianis et leges novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes, ed. by T. Mommsen and P. Meyer (Berlin, 1905), IX.3.6 [380], p. 442; IX.3.7 [409], pp. 442–43, Sirmon. 13 [419], p. 917), but Eusebius's complaint about mixed sexes seems to chide Constantius for acting against his own legislation (ibid., IX.3.3 [340], p. 441).

[96] *Ep.* 2, ed. by Bulhart, pp. 104–06; L. Dattrino, 'La lettera di Eusebio al clero e al populo della sua diocesi', *Lateranum*, 45 (1979), 60–82.

[97] *VE*, 758B, noting that another such letter was sent to Milan (yet another now lost source?).

[98] *VE*, 758A. Saxer, 'Fonti', pp. 142–43, notes similarities with the sermons (esp. E, G, and H), which build on Eusebius's own comments about his *artiori custodia*: *Ep.* 2, ed. by Bulhart, p. 107.

[99] *VE*, 757D. 'Servant of God, Eusebius, along with his fellow-servants, to Patrophilus the guard, and his servants. The Arriomaniacs seized me with tremendous force and with much violence dragged my naked body supine from an oh-so comfortable caged-hole in the ground to shut me up in yet another lodging. Neither bread to eat nor water to drink were provided unless I agreed to consent to them, but it is better for me to die corporally than consent to such. Beware, you are committing a crime against both divine and public law, for it has now been seven days, and unless you rectify this, without doubt you will be charged with homicide.'

The *Libellus* has been boiled down to bare essentials, keeping to the major themes expounded by Eusebius: his rough treatment, his imprisonment, his lack of food and water, and above all Eusebius's threat that Patrophilus will be prosecuted for murder. Moreover, in keeping with a flowing, historical narrative, the hagiographer prefaced his truncated version of the *Libellus* with some research he had done on the origins and etymology of 'Scythopolis' — called 'Bethsan', meaning 'house of the enemy', in the Old Testament, it was refounded by wild Scythians — information that confirmed what an ancient, barbaric, and remote place it was.[100]

The hagiographer's insertion of, and modifications to, the *Libellus ad Patrophilum* further demonstrate his ability to manipulate documents at his disposal for narrative effect. This is nowhere more evident than when he artfully used Eusebius's own closing subscription in the *Libellus* to conclude the *VE*, as though Eusebius himself had authorized the hagiographer's own creation and its dissemination:

> Praecepit enim idem Beatissimus Eusebius, ut in finem verborum illius, haec clausula scribatur: Adjuro te ego Eusebius Episcopus, qui has literas legeris, per Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, ut non supprimas, quae hic scripta sunt, sed aliis ad legendum contradas.[101]

Conclusion

The *VE* is not simply a fantastical, hagiographic tale that sacrifices historical accuracy for pious ideals and types. Nor was it cobbled together from fragmentary information mostly garnered from oral tradition and consolidated long after the events commemorated. Instead, it responds to other written narratives: chronicles and narrative histories that gave fragmentary information or stiffed Eusebius in favour of other contemporary figures; sermons celebrating the saint, his martyrdom, and his miracles; documents from Church councils; and Eusebius's own

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[100] *VE*, 757C, referring to Judges 1. 27 and the comments on such of Jerome, *De situ et nominibus locorum Hebraicorum* (PL 23: 883A), and Augustine, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, VII.8 (PL 34: 796).

[101] *VE*, 761A; 'For the most blessed Eusebius commanded that this clause in his own words be written at the end: "I, Eusebius the bishop, on behalf of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, beseech you who read this letter not to conceal what is written but pass it on for others to read."'

correspondence. His description of the council at Milan, while subordinated to an overarching, narrative scheme that promotes Vercelli's pre-Ambrosian authority, warrants serious attention as an independent and informed account of an important episode in the constitution of orthodoxy, based on documents now lost.

A precise date, and an immediate purpose or audience, for the composition of the *VE* remains to be determined.[102] The general context, however, is reflected in the comments of Pope Gregory I (in the guise of his deacon, Peter) cited at the beginning of this essay. Italy had many saints, but their deeds, and their importance, had been largely forgotten, or would be without a written narrative, as Gregory doubtless realized.[103] Gregory tackled the problem by focusing on oral reports of near contemporary figures, thus radically challenging the Italian hagiographic tradition, represented by the *VE*, which looked to the past, and the antiquity of the saint, for inspiration, prestige, and a common sense of identity. In the towns of Italy, and particularly northern Italy, this narrative tradition, rooted in civic pride and ecclesiastical authority, was to survive the assault of Gregory's rustic holy-men in the *Dialogues*, and continued to focus upon the earliest bishops as models of Christian leadership and as patron saints who brought their citizenry into the light, leaving their pagan, Roman past behind them. In looking back three, four, sometimes five centuries, Italian hagiography was profoundly historical in nature. The historical consciousness behind the *VE*, as with other Italian hagiographic works, was not simply the result of extant buildings and monuments — Roman, palaeo-Christian, Ostrogothic, or Lombard — that were part of the everyday, urban landscape of Italian towns and their resident hagiog-

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[102] The comments at the close of the *VE* that explain that his relics were so rare because his clergy did not cut his hair or nails and buried all his clothing with him (*VE*, 761A) may suggest an immediate concern over control of the cult and his relics, which by the time of Gregory of Tours had reached the house of his mother in Chalon-sur-Saône: Gregory of Tours, *Gloria confessorum*, ed. by Arndt and Krusch, III, p. 750. Likewise, the date and consecration of the church of St Theoginistes, supposedly built by Eusebius (*VE*, 761), may hold some clues, but both the cult and origins of this church are obscure: see G. Cantino Wataghin, 'Fonti archeologiche per la storia della cheisa di Vercelli', in *Eusebius di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. by dal Covolo, Uglione, and Vian, pp. 28–34. Picard, *Le souvenir*, p. 271, notes that the *VE* records the earliest instance of burial 'ad sanctos' within a church for bishops.

[103] Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, Prologue, IX, ed. by de Vogüé, II, 16: 'Petrus "Vellem quaerenti mihi de eis aliqua narrares [. . .] in narratione vero signorum cognoscimus inventa ac retenta qualiter declaratur."' On Gregory's purpose in the *Dialogues*, see R. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 60–61; J. Petersen, *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great in their Late Antique Cultural Background* (Toronto, 1984), pp. 56–72; J. Moorhead, 'Taking Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* Seriously', *Downside Review*, 121 (2003), 197–210.

raphers. Such tangible vestiges of the past undoubtedly contributed to an awareness and curiosity about history, in preachers and congregations, in writers and readers, alike. But the *VE* goes well beyond this: its use of documents, the saint's own writings, and even consultation of other sources to construct a coherent biography was nothing short of historical in method, modern or otherwise. Yet the hagiographer did not hesitate to subordinate details to a narrative scheme that emphasized the importance of both Eusebius and Vercelli in the establishment of orthodoxy in northern Italy, and consequently, the entire Christian world. In assessing this preference for a compelling, dramatic narrative over chronological or topographical precision, we do better to go beyond the application of our own modern standards, and listen for the narratives to which hagiographic texts were responding. In some cases, like that of the *VE*, we can trace them directly. But nearly all hagiography was written in response to the conventions of its own genre, knowledge of which came from other hagiographic works, in the form of models, plots, tropes, and motifs. It is this sense of genre, helpfully determinative yet also oppressively limiting for composition, which resulted in a degree of playfulness that can be detected in many early medieval Italian hagiographic works. This, rather than simply a lack of concern for historical accuracy, goes some way towards explaining the subordination of history to the narration of a ripping yarn. And for this, even if much more for Eusebius, an audience might be grateful.

ÆLFRIC'S ACCOUNT OF ST SWITHUN:
LITERATURE OF REFORM AND REWARD

Elaine Treharne

Hagiography and History

A definition of the genre of hagiography seems straightforward enough; it is 'the literary expression of the cult of the saints'[1] that concerns 'sacred stories designed to teach the faithful to imitate actions which the community had decided were paradigmatic'.[2] Within this broad categorization, there are obvious distinctions that can be made in any type of saint's life under consideration: those saints that are killed for their faith are martyrs celebrated in 'passions'; while those who live exemplary lives are confessors, celebrated in 'legends'. Thomas D. Hill suggests another method of refinement: 'a primary hagiographic text is a text that is itself a primary written witness to the life and deeds of a medieval saint' whereas 'secondary saints' lives' are 'lives of men and women whose sanctity could simply be taken for granted by the author, [which] are more characteristic of the genre of hagiography as a whole and are generally more appropriate texts for literary [rather than historical] analysis'.[3]

As with all generic distinctions, what seems initially to be an uncomplicated definition requires subsequent refinement to obtain a more detailed categoriza-

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[1] R. C. Love, 'Hagiography', in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes, and Donald Scragg (Oxford, 1999), p. 226.

[2] Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988), p. 5.

[3] Thomas D. Hill, '*Imago Dei*: Genre, Symbolism and Anglo-Saxon Hagiography', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 35–50 (pp. 36–37).

tion. 'Hagiography', broadly speaking, might be thought of as the macro-genre, containing a number of subgenres more precisely applicable to particular texts concerning saints. What is useful about 'genre' is its ability to define shared textual conventions that allow for coherent groupings of texts for discussion and analysis; but this is also, paradoxically, its major drawback. Its use has often led in the past to the easy dismissal of numerous hagiographic works as simply evincing conventions of the genre and little else of intrinsic interest to scholars.

Hagiography has been the subject of numerous critical responses because of its tendency to adhere to particular formulae[4] and its seeming inability to be read as historical narrative providing 'facts' that allow readers to discern the 'real' person behind the eulogized holy exemplar.[5] It is very often the sifting of the 'fantastic' from the 'factual' that provides the impetus for investigating hagiography: as scholars glean from the narrative those authentic elements that might throw light on the social *mores*, political events, or personalities of the medieval period.[6] This is, of course, a legitimate approach to hagiographic texts, but as Heffernan and Lifshitz have ably demonstrated, there is more to be gained from the genre.[7] It is the study of individual texts or related groups of texts within their original textual and cultural contexts that perhaps most effectively

[4] J. W. Earl, for example, comments that most saints' lives are 'utterly lacking in a sense of continuous narrative or psychological insight': 'Typology and Iconographic Style in Early Medieval Hagiography', *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 8 (1978), 15–46 (p. 21).

[5] One such comment might suffice here. In the 'Introduction' to her edited volume, *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988), p. 11, Barbara Yorke laments that 'It is hard to get behind such hagiography to an appreciation of what Æthelwold may actually have been like, though there can be no doubt he was an exceptional personality'.

[6] Dorothy Whitelock comments on Abbo's *passio* of the saint that 'Both [Abbo] and Dunstan were familiar with the many *Lives* of saints and likely to bring their accounts into line with what was expected of a work in this genre. It is obvious enough to say that a great deal of what Abbo says is embroidery, but it may always be a matter of opinion just how far he represents the actual facts told by the armour-bearer': 'Fact and Fiction in the Legend of St Edmund', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, 31 (for 1969), 217–33 (p. 219).

[7] Both studies — Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, particularly chapters 2 and 3, and Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical Texts" as Historical Narrative', *Viator*, 25 (1994), 95–113 — are excellent investigations of the complexity of 'genre' and earlier scholars' disengagement with hagiography in the light of empirical and positivist modes of historical analysis. On the contrary, for Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge, 1991), it is 'verisimilitude and unmistakable literary realism' that makes a text like the *Life of Christina of Markyate* 'so striking' (p. 149).

illuminates the significance of hagiography.[8] This kind of investigation can reveal the saint's life as much more than a tissue of authenticated history or fabrication; it becomes 'historical narrative' in its own right reflecting the concerns of the period in which it was composed.

It is precisely because of the limiting and limited applicability of generic classification that scholars in recent decades have sought to demonstrate how their particular textual subject breaks free from the shackles of convention to become something more than the usual saintly epitome. Through this individuating approach the historical resonances of the text become more apparent. For example, Hugh Magennis, in his meticulous study of the Old English *Legend of the Seven Sleepers* shows that 'it is noticeable that many of the conventional features of hagiography [. . .] are much less pronounced in the *Legend* than in the majority of Old English saints' lives'.[9] He deduces that the writer's focus is on 'endurance and passivity', coupled with 'a lively interest in [the saints'] psychological state',[10] elements of the text that mark out the particular emphases of the Old English adaptor in comparison with the Latin versions of the *Legend* and other vernacular hagiographies. This vernacular hagiographer thus evinces two historically pertinent facts: that he or she competently altered the authoritative Latin *fons* of the legend (illustrating the acknowledged status of and possibilities for vernacular composition in the late Anglo-Saxon period), and that the point of greatest interest for the Anglo-Saxon audience specifically was perceived to be the 'human interest' aspect of the *Legend*.[11]

The fluidity of the genre of hagiography, its close connection with other forms of historical narrative, and the ways in which scholars approach and problematize generic distinctions have been examined by Lifshitz.[12] One of her main points is that to divorce hagiography from historiography is rather to miss the point.[13] It is as historical narrative that this essay will treat Ælfric's account of St

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[8] See, in particular, Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre', pp. 103–08, on this issue.

[9] *The Anonymous Old English Legend of the Seven Sleepers*, ed. by Hugh Magennis, Durham Medieval Texts, 7 (Durham, 1994), p. 23.

[10] *Legend of the Seven Sleepers*, ed. by Magennis, pp. 23–24.

[11] *Legend of the Seven Sleepers*, ed. by Magennis, p. 24.

[12] On which see, among others, Roger D. Ray, 'Medieval Historiography through the Twelfth Century: Problems and Progress of Research', *Viator*, 5 (1974), 33–59 (pp. 35–43).

[13] As Lifshitz eloquently states, 'the fact that "hagiographical" narratives (both original and revised versions) have frequently been stigmatized as "untrue" can still blind us to their function as historical *writing*, despite their increasingly enthusiastic rehabilitation as historical

Swithun. Modern, or at least early modern, conceptions of historicity are not shared by early medieval hagiographers. A hagiographer could and did move between writing the lives of saints and writing the chronicle of his or her religious institution, arguably seeing little difference between the modes of composition. To decontextualize this composition, anachronistically to impose generic categorization on these forms of writing, is to perform a disservice to the hagiographers, historians, and other authors of the medieval period.[14]

Ælfric as Hagiographer

With these issues firmly foregrounded, the following discussion seeks to contribute to the debate about the genres of hagiography and historical narrative: about the self-perceived role of the hagiographer; the textual and rhetorical mechanisms for establishing realism and historicity in the saint's account; and the form and function of saints' lives. The example employed will be Ælfric's Old English account of the posthumous miracles of the Winchester bishop and saint, Swithun. Ælfric's vernacular work is simultaneously shaped by the tenth-century Benedictine reform and is itself a shaper of that religious phenomenon. As such, it evinces theological, ecclesiological, and political concerns that mark it out as a product very much reflecting its author's own agenda within his own historical context.

    Ælfric's narration of the miracles of St Swithun is not a typical hagiography,[15] despite being in a collection of saints' lives and despite being commonly labelled

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sources': 'Beyond Positivism and Genre', p. 95. She continues: 'Biography, of saints or of other figures, seems to have been the most popular form of historical narrative in the Middle Ages, just as it is today' (p. 97).

    [14] Patrick Geary, 'Saints, Scholars and Society: The Elusive Goal', in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*, ed. by Sandro Sticca, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 141 (Binghamton, NY, 1996), pp. 1–22, develops and expands upon this debate. He states that hagiographic scholars 'By remaining sensitive to the context in which hagiographic production took place [. . .] are able to understand for whom and, often against whom, these texts were produced. Finally, in their close readings of their texts, they find "not a medieval mind", but a variety of minds, a spectrum of people reacting to the living tradition of the saints within their midst' (p. 21).

    [15] If one accepts that hagiography is 'the writing of the lives of saints' as stated by *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1983), *s.v.* 'hagiography'.

as such.[16] Rather than dealing with the life of the saint, Swithun, it deals only with the saint's posthumous miracles, providing virtually no information about Swithun's life at all. As the miracles of the saint are performed within living memory and in the locality of Ælfric, the audience would know something of the saint and be familiar with some or all of the miraculous occurrences being recounted. Such a knowledgeable audience would, one imagines, reasonably anticipate a more objective or empiricist representation of first-hand experience than represented in the lives and passions of distant, long-dead saints.

Ælfric, as is well known from the work of scholars such as Joyce Hill and Jon Wilcox, was an unusually self-aware, learned, and intuitive author.[17] As a monastic alumnus of Winchester Cathedral school (where his mentor was Bishop Æthelwold), Ælfric had been immersed in the reinvigorated monasticism instigated by the Benedictine reform in the second half of the tenth century and the self-conscious erudition associated with it. Æthelwold himself was one of the three major figures in this reform and had been responsible for the key work of that reform, the *Regularis Concordia*, together with its translation into the vernacular.[18] It may have been the importance attached to the provision of vernacular texts by Æthelwold that inspired his student, Ælfric, to recognize the crucial role of English in disseminating Christian doctrine and to produce the very significant number of works in Old English that mark him out as the most prolific vernacular author of the Anglo-Saxon period.

Among Ælfric's works,[19] the *Catholic Homilies*, Series I and II, and the *Lives of Saints* offer a relatively comprehensive set of texts for both the *sanctorale* and

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[16] It is a 'straightforward' saint's life in the specific context of Joyce Hill's 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*: A Preliminary Survey', in *Holy Men and Holy Women*, ed. by Szarmach, pp. 234–59 (p. 248).

[17] Joyce Hill has written extensively about Ælfric, his texts, sources, and context. See for example, 'Ælfric and Smaragdus', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 21 (1992), 203–47; 'Monastic Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric's Pastoral Letters in Context', in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Carola Hicks (Stamford, 1992), pp. 103–17; and 'Translating the Tradition: Manuscripts, Models and Methodologies in the Composition of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 79 (1997), 43–65. *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox, Durham Medieval Texts, 9 (Durham, 1994) contains an excellent introduction to the author, his life, and his literary and religious concerns in his writings.

[18] For this, and the other works produced by Æthelwold, see Michael Lapidge, 'Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher', in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. by Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 89–117.

[19] *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. by Wilcox, provides a splendid introduction to Ælfric's *oeuvre*.

temporale of the Church year: well over one hundred items in total.[20] The *Lives of Saints*, composed between *c.* 992 and 1002 at the request of the Wessex ealdormen Æthelweard and his son Æthelmær,[21] contains twenty-nine Ælfrician compositions arranged in the sequence of the Church year.[22] Whereas the *Catholic Homilies* included among its predominant homiletic materials hagiographies of saints celebrated nationally by the Church, and seems to have been designed in the first instance for Ælfric's own use and then 'issued for general circulation to furnish the clergy with a sufficiently comprehensive body of orthodox preaching material in the vernacular',[23] the *Lives of Saints* was designed to a different remit: that of personal (though not necessarily private) reading and devotion.[24] Ælfric's remarkable awareness as author allows a rare insight through his *Prefaces* into the method and motivation behind his work.

As a hagiographer, Ælfric is explicit about his technique and his purpose. In his Latin *Preface* to the *Lives of Saints*, he explains that:

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[20] See Michael Lapidge, 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale*', in *Holy Men and Holy Women*, ed. by Szarmach, pp. 115–29, for a useful summary of the items, and Ælfric's sources and design.

[21] For both of whom see Barbara Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', in *Bishop Æthelwold*, ed. by Yorke, pp. 65–88 (pp. 76–77).

[22] The earliest extant manuscript containing the *Lives of Saints* is London, British Library, Cotton MSS, Julius E VII, the basis of W. W. Skeat's edition of the collection (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS, o.s., 76, 82, 94, 114 (London, 1889–1900; repr. 2 vols, 1966)). The manuscript is dated to the early eleventh century, contemporary with Ælfric. However, there are four non-Ælfrician hagiographic items in the manuscript, and a number of non-hagiographical pieces. It is therefore difficult to discern the precise nature of Ælfric's original collection intended for use by his commissioners and patrons, Ealdormen Æthelweard and Æthelmær. See Hill, 'Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*' for an explication of the manuscript contents.

[23] *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Peter Clemoes, EETS, s.s., 17 (Oxford, 1997), p. 65. The *Catholic Homilies* were sent to Sigeric, Archbishop of Canterbury, and appear to have been disseminated from the archiepiscopal see. Numerous manuscripts dating from the end of the tenth to the beginning of the thirteenth century contain material from the *Catholic Homilies*, demonstrating its widespread transmission, for which see *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes.

[24] Its manuscript circulation is much more limited than that of the *Catholic Homilies*. The *Lives of Saints* survives most completely in Cotton MSS, Julius E VII, and in part in a number of other manuscripts, including one very late codex, Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii. 1. 33. Hill, 'Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*', discusses the respective codicological contexts; see also Joyce Hill, 'The Preservation and Transmission of Ælfric's Saints' Lives: Reader-Reception and Reader-Response in the Early Middle Ages', in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal, Studies in Medieval Culture, 40 (Kalamazoo, 1997), pp. 405–30.

> Hunc quoque codicem transtulimus de Latinitate ad usitatam Anglicam sermoci-
> nationem, studentes aliis prodesse edificando ad fidem lectione huius narrationis,
> quibuscumque placuerit huic operi operam dare, sive legendo seu audiendo, quia
> estimo non esse ingratum fidelibus [. . .] Illa vero que scripturus sum suspicor non
> offendere audientes, sed magis fide torpentes recreare hortationibus, quia martyrum
> passiones nimium fidem erigant languentem.[25]

The motivation is to make accessible to those who are not fluent in Latin exem-
plary lives in English that will encourage the consolidation of belief and inspire
Christians to better practice. It is possible to learn from this explanation that the
miraculous acts of Christian saints, particularly those martyred for their faith,
might either offend the contemporary audience, perhaps through sensationalist
detail or gratuitous violence (clearly not Ælfric's aim),[26] or revitalize and moti-
vate them. The desire of the author to improve his audience's personal and
public commitment to their faith very much informs the actions of Ælfric, as it
does the other major authors of the reform period. It is clear that Ælfric's incen-
tive for writing his *Lives* is also broader than a simple narration of the acts of the
saints themselves; it is the spiritual consequences of these acts, and what the acts
signify within God's plan for humanity, that are the principal consideration. In
his Old English *Preface* to the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric provides further details
about the impetus for his work:

> Þu wast, leof, þæt we awendon on þæm twam ærrum bocum þæra halgena þrowunga
> and lif þe Angelcynn mid freolsdagum wurþað. Nu gewearð us þæt we þas boc be þæra
> halgena ðrowungum and life gedihton þe mynstermenn mid heora þenungum betwux
> him wurðiað.[27]

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[25] *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. by Wilcox, pp. 119–20, 131. 'We have also translated this book from
Latin into the ordinary English language, desiring, by edifying in the faith through the reading
of this narrative, to profit any others whom it pleases to give their attention to this work either
by reading or listening, for I do not reckon it to be disagreeable to the faithful [. . .] But I
undertake that those [lives] which I write will not offend the listener but rather will revive
those flagging in faith through exhortations because the passions of martyrs greatly arouse a
languishing faith.'

[26] Indeed, in Ælfric's martyred saints' lives, he generally minimizes sensationalist or violent
aspects.

[27] *Old and Middle English: An Anthology*, ed. by Elaine Treharne (Oxford, 2000), pp.
130–31. 'You know, dear man, that we translated into those two previous books the passions
and lives of the saints that the English people honoured with feast days. Now it occurred to
us that in this book we should write of the sufferings and lives of those saints whom monks
honour among themselves in their services.'

The saints' lives incorporated into 'þæm twam ærrum bocum', the *Catholic Homilies*, are those then venerated by the whole English nation;[28] these now adapted by Ælfric in the *Lives of Saints* reflect the liturgical practices of a notionally homogeneous monastic collective in England in the late tenth century to which some can gain access through the translations.

Ælfric's declared motivation in the translation and adaptation of his various exemplars is thus the spiritual education and encouragement of listeners and readers who might otherwise be excluded from the lessons of saints' lives written in Latin. The impetus for and reception of these vernacular works position Ælfric as a (self-declared) major religious author and evangelist in late tenth- and early eleventh-century southern England, whose principal concerns are fulfilment of a request from his patrons, the provision of materials of significant benefit to his audience, and an overt desire to compose narrative texts about the saints that adhere to received truths.

Ælfric's concern to iterate only perceived truth within his narrative, while stated throughout his work, is nowhere more explicit than in his English Preface to the *Lives of Saints*:

> Ne secge we nan þincg niwes on þissere gesetnysse, for þan ðe hit stod gefyrn awriten on Ledenbocum, þeah þe þa læwedan men þæt nyston. Nelle we eac mid leasungum þyllic liccetan, for þan þe geleaffulle fæderas and halige lareowas hit awriton on Ledenspræce to langum gemynde and to trymmincge þam towerdum mannum.[29]

Not only does Ælfric deny 'originality', with all its concomitant dangers of a lack of inherited authority, but he also refutes deliberate falsehood (which he there-fore recognizes critically in other texts), situating himself firmly within the Latin, authoritative tradition to which he properly sees himself as belonging.[30] This

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[28] Such as St Stephen, St Laurence, St Bartholemew, Saints Peter and Paul, St Gregory, St James, and St Martin. For the texts, discussions of these lives, and the manuscript contexts, see *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, ed. by Clemoes; and *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, The Second Series: Text*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, EETS, s.s., 5 (Oxford, 1979), and Malcolm Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary, and Glossary*, EETS, s.s., 18 (Oxford, 2000).

[29] *Old and Middle English Anthology*, ed. by Treharne, pp. 130–31. 'We say nothing new in this composition, because it has stood written down before in Latin books, though laymen did not know that. Neither shall we feign such a thing with falsehoods, because devout fathers and holy teachers wrote it in Latin language as a lasting memorial, and as confirmation for future people.'

[30] This itself is a typical hagiographic motif extending far back into the tradition. For example, in *The Life of Saint Anthony* (trans. and annot. by R. T. Meyer (Westminster, MD,

context provides Ælfric with a laudable lineage for his works and marks him out, quite deliberately, as an *auctor* who can be trusted and relied upon to vouchsafe his own writings in the light of eminent and inspired predecessors.[31]

That Ælfric believed that in his *Lives of Saints* he was creating or adapting a providentially historical, divinely inspired, narrative for the promulgation of holy exemplars cannot be doubted.[32] The rhetoric of verisimilitude, of purposeful historicity, is everywhere present in his biographical and miracle-recounting narratives, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the acts attributed to Winchester Old Minster's primary saint, Swithun.

1950), p. 17), Athanasius advises: 'So, do not disbelieve the reports you have received from others concerning him, but be assured that you have heard very little from them. Indeed, they have scarcely told you all when there is so much to tell; and when I, too, whatever I may convey to you by letter at your request, shall be giving you only a few of the recollections I have of him. You on your part must not cease to make enquiries of all voyagers arriving from here. Thus perhaps as each tells what he knows, an account will be had that does approximate justice to him [. . .]. Throughout I have been scrupulously considerate of the truth: I wanted no one to refuse credence because of what he heard was too much, nor, again, to make light of the man because he did not learn enough about him.'

[31] The concern is not only a general authorial one, but of broader applicability affecting the future transmission of his work, for Ælfric, as is well known, stipulates that those who go on to copy his work do so correctly and without interpolating other materials. 'Ic bidde nu on Godes naman, gif hwa þas boc awritan wille, þæt he hi wel gerihte be þære bysne, and þær na mare betwux ne sette þonne we awendon' ('I pray now in the name of God, if anyone wishes to copy this book, that he correct it well according to the exemplar; and place within it no more than we have translated') 'Ælfric's Old English *Preface* to the *Lives of Saints*', in *Old and Middle English Anthology*, ed. by Treharne, pp. 130–31. This stipulation, as Joyce Hill and others have discussed (Hill, 'Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*', pp. 235–36) was rapidly ignored by copyists. The lack of concern by subsequent manuscript compilers for Ælfric's mandate illustrates that his promotion of authenticity and cogency was not shared by all.

[32] Ælfric's belief in his depiction of the truth and historicity of these divine events seems certain. As the later monastic theologian Anselm of Canterbury so movingly explains in his *Proslogion*: 'sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum. Neque enim quæro intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia "nisi credidero, non intelligam"' ('But I do desire to understand Your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that "unless I believe, I shall not understand" [Isaiah 7. 9]'). See *St Anselm's Proslogion*, ed. and trans. by M. J. Charlesworth (Oxford, 1965; repr., Notre Dame, 1979), pp. 114–15.

Ælfric's Account of St Swithun[33]

For his account of St Swithun, Ælfric turned to what may be considered local sources for his narrative inspiration.[34] On 15 July 971, Bishop Æthelwold was responsible for the translation of St Swithun's relics into a new bejewelled shrine inside the Old Minster in Winchester. This marked the full recognition of the cult of Swithun, subsequently consolidated and promoted by the creation of a Latin account of the translation and miracles of the saint, the *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* (*c.* 975), composed by Lantfred, a monk possibly from Fleury who had been assisting Æthelwold in implementing the reforms in Winchester.[35] This was followed by Wulfstan of Winchester's Latin *Narratio metrica de S. Swithuni* (*c.* 996).[36] Both of these texts provide detailed versions of the events surrounding the rediscovery of the saint after his appearance in a vision in the late 960s, one hundred years after his death[37] and relate the posthumous miracles that occurred at Swithun's tomb after his translation. It is thus Æthelwold and his monks who gain the credit for the creation of the cult of Swithun, together with other saints associated with the reformed institutions. Æthelwold certainly saw the benefit of promoting holy figures 'to enhance the prestige of his

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[33] *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, as number xxi; and also edited by G. I. Needham: *Ælfric: Lives of Three English Saints* (Exeter, 1966; rev. edn, 1976), pp. 60–81. This essay was originally written before the publication of Michael Lapidge's magisterial volume, *The Cult of St Swithun*, The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester, 2, Winchester Studies, 4 (Oxford, 2003). Lapidge provides a full analysis of the cult of St Swithun throughout the medieval period and includes texts and translations of the four principal tenth-century texts: Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, Wulfstan the Cantor's metrical *Narratio metrica de S. Swithuno*, the *Epitome translationis et miraculorum S. Swithuni* (for whom Lapidge plausibly offers Ælfric as author), and Ælfric's vernacular account.

[34] In a recent study, Mechthild Gretsch has suggested that Ælfric's choice of saints' lives might have been influenced by those included in the Benedictional of Æthelwold, which contained, among others, full images and prayers for Æthelthryth and Swithun. See 'Ælfric's *Sanctorale* and the Benedictional of Æthelwold', in *Early Medieval Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. by Elaine Treharne and Susan Rosser, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies (Tempe, AZ, 2002), pp. 31–50. See also Andrew Prescott, 'The Text of the Benedictional of St Æthelwold', in *Bishop Æthelwold*, ed. by Yorke, pp. 119–47, where he discusses the blessing for St Swithun's Day included in the Benedictional, which has a 'reference to recent miracles at the saint's shrine' (p. 133).

[35] For text, see Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 217–334.

[36] Lapidge, 'Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher', p. 89. For text, see Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 335–552.

[37] Swithun was Bishop of Winchester from 852 to 862.

foundations'.[38] The political, as well as the religious, motives for the promotion of Swithun by Æthelwold and his associates 'showed the old order [of the pre-Viking Age] blessing the new and helped to reconcile at least some of the ex-pelled canons and the families from which they (and probably Swithun himself) were drawn'.[39] Both Lantfred and Wulfstan's Latin narrations are the compositions of monks loyal to Æthelwold and the Old Minster, eager to honour the Bishop and the foundation by the dissemination of Swithun's cult, which subsequently raised the profile of the saint himself and, naturally, the prestige of the institution in which he lay.

Ælfric, in composing his Old English account of Swithun, drew on Lantfred's text and on the *Epitome translationis et miraculorum S. Swithuni*, itself an abbreviated version of Lantfred.[40] In his recent comprehensive analysis and edition of the Swithun cult and texts, Lapidge has made a very strong case for regarding the author of the *Epitome* as Ælfric himself.[41] In the subsequent, expanded vernacular account, Ælfric was ostensibly providing for Æthelweard and Æthelmær lives of saints venerated within monastic institutions. It seems clear that the monastic institution whose *sanctorale* practices he drew upon was that of the Old Minster, Winchester, practices he had, presumably, adopted and adapted for use at the monasteries of Cerne Abbas, where he was a monk, and latterly at Eynsham where he was abbot, both foundations patronized by Æthelweard and Æthelmær.[42] In effect Ælfric's promotion of his original alma mater through his own monastic offices was transmitted to a new audience by his Old English *Lives of Saints* — this time a lay one — and thus his, and Winchester's, prestige and status would have been considerably enhanced and broadened by his vernacular work.[43]

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[38] Alan Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', in *Bishop Æthelwold*, ed. by Yorke, pp. 43–64 (p. 61).

[39] Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', pp. 61–62. In reforming Winchester Old Minster, Æthelwold had ejected the canons then replaced them with Benedictine monks, clearly creating some ill feeling.

[40] See Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 217–610.

[41] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 553–57.

[42] Cerne Abbas was founded by Æthelweard and Æthelmær, and Eynsham by the latter. See *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. by Wilcox, p. 9. See also Christopher A. Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 24 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 11–15.

[43] This original audience, of two lay patrons, was later expanded by the collection's employment in a number of manuscripts containing homiletic and hagiographic texts, such as Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii. 1. 33, dated to the second half of the twelfth century,

Ælfric's Old English narrative of Swithun's posthumous miracles contains (in Lapidge's edition) twenty-nine sections, fourteen of which are drawn from the *Epitome*; the fourteen episodes equate to that Latin text in its entirety. Lantfred's account, drawn on for twelve episodes in Ælfric's Old English text (four of which are also in the *Epitome*), contains forty episodes, and is therefore much fuller than Ælfric's version. What is particularly interesting about Ælfric's account of St Swithun is its excision of all non-localized events present in Lantfred and its omission of all miracles performed upon women, with the exception of the 'token' one.[44] The consequence of Ælfric's reshaping of Lantfred's text is a sharply focused work, which foregrounds above all else the concerns of the Benedictine reform within a specifically male setting.[45] The changes he makes to his Latin sources thus heighten the apparent historicity and local relevance of the narrative, arguably making the vernacular account the most authoritative and 'true' version available. Moreover, within the post-reform period, one of the intended functions of Ælfric's text may have been to bolster the continuity of the reform movement. Thus, the account of Swithun is reformist not only in terms of Ælfric's own, personal context and agenda, but also in the ways that the text both is informed by and informs the events of the Benedictine reform of the late 960s and 970s. In discussing eleventh-century saints' lives, Kathleen G. Cushing claims a distinction should be drawn between those sanctified in the period of the eleventh-century Gregorian reforms and those religious churchmen sanctified in earlier periods.[46] This distinction is summarized thus:

and London, British Library, Cotton MSS, Vitellius D VII, dated to the mid-eleventh century, that probably originated in monastic scriptoria, possibly for monastic or pastoral use. See Hill, 'Preservation and Transmission of Ælfric's Saints' Lives'.

[44] There are nine chapters containing miracles performed for women specifically in Lantfred (Lapidge's 6, 8–10, 20–21, 32–33, 38), and a number of others where miracles affect both sexes (Lantfred 12, 14, 19, for example). Of these, Ælfric only includes chapter 6 from Lantfred, as his chapter 12, in which a slave girl, wrongly shackled, is freed from her manacles through the intervention of Swithun. This deliberate excising by Ælfric of the majority of women from his source texts will be fully analysed in my forthcoming 'Ælfric and the Problem of Women', in *The Invisible Woman: Ælfric and his Subject Female*, ed. by Mary Swan, Leeds Studies in English.

[45] The focus on Benedictinism and a specifically male context is also evident in Ælfric's Lives of Benedict and Gregory, as discussed by Mary Swan in her paper at the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists' Conference, Scottsdale, Arizona, 2003.

[46] Kathleen G. Cushing, 'Events that Led to Sainthood: Sanctity and the Reformers in the Eleventh Century', in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford, 2001), pp. 187–96.

> In traditional hagiography the saint becomes the servant of a specific place or community. In the new hagiography of a movement, however, the locus of the cult is as much universal as personal. To put it another way, the 'locus' is the servant of the righteous cause, but the cult is actually the exaltation and perpetuation of the movement. In this light, the Lives not only function as commemorative, didactic hagiography, providing sainted figures for specific communities, but they also, more interestingly, try to sanctify the reform movement itself by situating the sanctity of the individual within the events of the struggle for reform.[47]

Cushing is undoubtedly right about this relocation of the saint into the nexus of reform during the later eleventh century, but her claims are also equally applicable to earlier hagiographies and are thus not unique to the Gregorian reforms. It is precisely this central focus on the saint as a holy testimony to the rectitude of the relevant ecclesiastical movement that is emphasized in Ælfric's account of St Swithun. Even more than in Ælfric's own sources, the saint becomes the reinforcer of aspects of the Benedictine reform in late tenth-century Winchester: he is the saint who insists upon an active obedience by good deeds from those who bear witness to him. Swithun also becomes, in effect, a God-given reward for the actions of those involved in the reform, including the now-deceased King, Edgar. This is particularly emphasized by the unique framework of the posthumous miracles, which highlights the people and actions of the Benedictine reform, inspired by the conjunction of the secular and ecclesiastical powerbrokers in the personages of Edgar, Æthelwold, and Archbishop Dunstan (but not Oswald, Bishop of Worcester). In the introductory lines to Ælfric's account, the historical context for the discovery and rehabilitation of Swithun is detailed:

> On Eadgares dagum ðæs æðelan cyninges, þa ða se Cristendom wæs wel ðeonde þurh God on Angelcynne under ðam ylcan cynincge, þa geswutelode God þone sanct Swiðhun mid manegum wundrum þæt he mære is. His dæda næron cuðe ær ðan þe hi God sylf cydde; ne we ne fundon on bocum hu se bisceop leofode on þissere worulde, ær ðan þe he gewende to Criste. Þæt wæs þæra gymeleast (þe on life hine cuþon), þæt hi noldon awritan his weorc and drohtnunge þam toweardum mannum ðe his mihte ne cuðon; ac God hæfð swaþeah his lif geswutelod mid swutelum wundrum and syllicum tacnum.[48]

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[47] Cushing, 'Events that Led to Sainthood', p. 188.

[48] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 1, p. 590: 'In the days of Edgar, the noble king, when Christianity, through God, was flourishing well among the English under that very king, then God revealed Saint Swithun, [demonstrating] by numerous miracles that he is glorious. His deeds were not known before God himself made them known; nor do we find in any books about how the bishop lived in this world before he returned to Christ. That was a result of the negligence of those who knew him in his life that they did not want to write about his

Ælfric, staying close to his own source, the *Epitome*,[49] relates the historical circumstances in which the rehabilitation of the saint took place and how, in effect, the revelation of the saint through his miracle-working is God's reward for the stability and reconfirmation of the Christian faith provided for the English by Edgar. Moreover, Ælfric constructs himself within a specific historical and cultural context (but one that is in the past, 'In the days of Edgar') that appreciated and paid homage to the work and life of God's saints, in contrast to those who were contemporary with Swithun himself. It may be, too, given the framework of the most dynamic years of the Benedictine reform, that Ælfric implicitly regards the time of his writing (during Æthelred's reign) as a time more akin to the 'negligence' of the ninth century than the glory of the 960s and 970s. He claims the carelessness of ninth-century hagiographers has resulted in no written sources to supply details of the *vita* of Swithun, a negligence not repeated by those authors who function under the auspices of the Benedictine reform.[50] As if to counter this negligence, and provide what slight information there is, Ælfric then adds his own particulars:

> Ðes Swyðhun wæs bisceop on Winceastre (swaþeah ofer Hamtunscire), gesælig Godes þeowa; and eahte bisceopas wæron betwux him and [Sancte] Aðelwolde.[51]

Typically, Ælfric supplies temporal precision to his account,[52] effectively creating a historically accurate chronological summary and an episcopal lineage for both Swithun and Æthelwold that links them directly as servants of God in their prelacies, but also as saints in their pious achievements. Æthelwold's own merits as one of the leaders of the reform are credited with greater force through his association with the saint he himself promoted. This association is underpinned and

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achievements and way of life for subsequent generations who would not know his powerful deeds; but nevertheless God has revealed his life with manifest wonders and marvellous miracles.' *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 60, lines 1–11.

[49] See Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 564–65 and 590–91.

[50] In the light of the current debate about the genre of hagiography outlined at the beginning of this essay it is interesting to note that Ælfric here provides information about the contents and function of a saint's *vita*: the saint's *modus vivendi*, conversations, and achievements in a written form useful for subsequent dissemination.

[51] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 1: 'This Swithun was bishop of Winchester, and thus of Hampshire, a blessed servant of God, and there were eight bishops between him and Saint Æthelwold.' *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 60, lines 11–14.

[52] As he does in many other saints' lives, such as *The Passion of St Edmund*. See Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 590–91, n. 7, for these eight bishops.

emphasized by parallel descriptive collocations for Swithun as 'milda bisceop', 'se arwurða Swyðun', 'sancte Swiþun', and Æthelwold, '[se] arwurða bisceope', 'sancte Aðelwolde', 'se arwurða and se eadiga bisceop', 'Æþelwold se arwurða'. The worthiness and blessedness of both Swithun and Æthelwold are highlighted throughout the text, as one would expect, as are their common roles as bishops and saints (although Æthelwold was never officially canonized) of Winchester.

Creating balance within the text is the unique concluding material, which reflects the introductory matter in its historical contextualization:

> We habbað nu gesæd be Swiðhune þus sceortlice, and we secgað to soðan þæt se tima wæs gesælig and wynsum on Angelcynne, þa ða Eadgar cyning þone Cristendom gefyrðrode and fela munuclifa arærde; and his cynerice wæs wunigende on sibbe, swa þæt man ne gehyrde gif ænig sciphere wære buton agenre leode þe ðis land heoldon;[53] [. . .] Þærtoeacan wæron swilce wundra gefremode þurh þone halgan Swiðhun (swa swa we sædon ær) and swa lange swa we leofodon, þær wurdon gelome wundra. On ðam timan wæron eac wurðfulle bisceopas — Dunstan se anræda æt ðam ercestole, and Aþelwold se arwurða, and oðre gehwilce; ac Dunstan and Aþelwold wæron Drihtne gecorene, and hi swiðost manodon menn to Godes willan, and ælc god arærdon Gode to gecwemednysse: þæt geswuteliað þa wundra þe God wyrcð þurh hi.[54]

This authorial confirmation of the peace and prosperity that belonged to the first period of the reform under Edgar's promotion and support provides, with the opening lines of the text, an overarching metanarrative through which Ælfric can be seen to be as much concerned with the golden age of the reform (in which he situates himself) as with recounting 'in truth' Swithun's miracles.[55] The miracles of the saint are simply a God-given manifestation of the holiness attributed to the proponents of the reform, including Swithun. The careful use of a sense of

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[53] An indirect reference to the Viking incursions current when Ælfric composed his account.

[54] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 28, p. 606: 'We have now, therefore, spoken briefly of Swithun, and we narrate in truth that that time was prosperous and joyful in England when King Edgar advanced Christianity and established many monasteries, and his kingdom lived in peace, such that no-one heard of any naval force other than that belonging to the people who owned this land; [. . .] In addition to that, there were such miracles performed through the holy Swithun, as we have already said. At that time there were also esteemed bishops — Dunstan the steadfast at the archbishopric, and Æthelwold the venerable and others like them; but Dunstan and Æthelwold were the Lord's chosen, and they, most of all, exhorted people to do God's will, and established everything good to the pleasure of God, as the miracles which God performed through them demonstrate.' *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, pp. 80–81, lines 369–86.

[55] For the author's establishment of an '*ethos* of veracity', see Morse, *Truth and Convention*, pp. 138–40.

the history, the past, of these opening and closing statements creates a deliberate contrast with the decline in stability clearly occurring when Ælfric composed his account.[56] The age of saints that Ælfric outlines here includes not only his subject saint, but also those who did God's work through the reform: Edgar, Dunstan, and Æthelwold, in particular. Their work in establishing the monasteries and urging good, Christian behaviour is rewarded by God's revelation of Swithun to the benefit of the whole English nation. Thus the reform becomes less a personal and localized ecclesiastical movement, and much more of a national, divine reward, a cause célèbre.[57]

This motif of reward underpins Ælfric's account of Swithun, operating on a number of levels to yield a text that illustrates clearly the efficacy of the reform both as a movement of monastic regeneration and as an initiator of God's blessing on the people. While individual miracles themselves are quite obviously a form of reward for innate belief in God and the saint's intercessory powers, the miracles performed by Swithun function to consolidate and enhance the prestige and success of the reformers, such as Æthelwold, and, implicitly by association, Ælfric himself. The saint, his miracles, and his consequent fame with all its positive implications for the status of Old Minster are recompense for the work of the reformers both directly and indirectly.

In the first of the miracles related by Ælfric,[58] the saint's initial appearance is in a vision experienced by a 'sumum gelyfedan smyðe' ('certain faithful smith') who is advised to go and tell a priest called Eadsige to report the vision to Æthelwold, who is to open Swithun's grave and translate the relics inside the Old Minster.[59] This Eadsige, a relative of Æthelwold,[60] is one of the secular canons

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[56] As pointed out by Needham (*Lives of Three English Saints*, p. 80, n. to line 373) and by numerous other scholars discussing other works by Ælfric where this same contrast is effected through his writing.

[57] There is some irony in this positioning of Swithun as a national, English saint, when throughout the text, Ælfric excises the episodes that refer to recipients of miracles who come from Rochester, London, and further afield, such as France (Lantfred, chapters 11–13, 17, 19, 32–34, 36–37, for example). All of Ælfric's cured and saved are local to Winchester, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight.

[58] And which appears in Lantfred's version and in Ælfric's *Epitome*.

[59] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapters 2–6, pp. 580–95; *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, pp. 63–65, lines 18–78. This is discussed by Lapidge in 'Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher', pp. 104, 113.

[60] *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 65, line 72. Ælfric alone provides this information, though 'se sanct' to whom Eadsige is related is not specifically named.

expelled by Æthelwold in his refoundation of the Old Minster, who had subsequently 'detested Bishop Æthelwold and all the monks who were in the Old Minster'.[61] Swithun's interventions effect the spiritual enlightenment of Eadsige, who subsequently retreats to the Minster and, taking monastic vows, lives there until his death. The saint, through picking his priestly envoy carefully — one who is clearly in need of the help of the saint to reform personally — condones the actions of Æthelwold in creating his monastic establishment: the reward for Eadsige is in the embrace of the minster and the correction of his previously proud ways. Æthelwold's reforms are shown to be blessed by God through this successful outcome, and his acceptance of Eadsige into his monastery suggests his forgiveness of a wayward secular and his desire to assist in Eadsige's repentance. In such ways, the text explicitly demonstrates approbation of Æthelwold and his reforming actions, which affect not only entire institutions, but also individuals. This authorial approval is to be expected in an account that serves to propagate a saint directly associated with Æthelwold and the Old Minster. The detail that is provided, though, supplies a realistic, historical backdrop to the events depicted. This is not simply an idealized, fictional account of a saint about whose life little is known; rather, it is presented as the discourse of the historian, narrating the objective specificity of each episode through the use of personal names, direct speech, and minor features that reinforce the political and ecclesiastical agenda of Æthelwold and his fellow reformers.

That Swithun is recast as a reforming bishop (albeit a long dead one) is consistently demonstrated through his words and deeds. Despite the fact that Ælfric states that nothing was known of Swithun's life, he is able to re-create the saint in Swithun's appearances in a number of visions. It is here that the animated Swithun demonstrates himself to be very closely allied with Æthelwold and to have the notional personality and concerns of a reformer. In the vision of the smith just recounted, Swithun asks whether the smith knows Eadsige, 'þe wæs of Ealdan Mynstre mid ðam oðrum preostum adræfed for heora unþeawum þurh

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[61] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 5, p. 593. The Peterborough version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *s.a.* 963, explains: 'On þes oðer gear syððon he wæs gehalgod, þa makode he feola minstra 7 draf ut þa clerca of þe biscoprice, forþan þet hi noldon nan regul healden, 7 sætta þær muneca' ('In the next year after he was consecrated he founded many monasteries, and drove the clerks out of the bishopric because they would not observe any rule, and set monks there'): *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. VII: *MS E*, ed. by Susan Irvine (Cambridge, 2004), p. 57, *s.a.* 963; trans. by Michael Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1996), pp. 114–15.

Aðelwold biscop?'[62] Swithun, as God's intermediary, shows historical knowledge of the priests' ejection and approval of this course of action through the condemnatory description of their behaviour. Continuing his discussion with the smith, Swithun tells him that he is to warn Eadsige to mend his ways, fixing his mind firmly on the eternal life. At the third visitation, Swithun reprimands the smith for his inaction caused by the fear of being branded a liar, and the determined saint reproves him particularly because 'nolde gehyrsumian his hæsum mid weorce'.[63] This slight expansion, emphasizing the need for *weorce*, in an otherwise heavily abbreviated episode in Lantfred and the *Epitome*,[64] underscores Ælfric's concerns, evinced throughout his work, to convert good intentions into action.

Similarly, later in the text, an old bedridden thane sees Swithun in a vision.[65] Before the thane can be healed, Swithun warns him not to do evil to anyone, or curse anyone, or speak evil, or consent to murder, or join in evil deeds. The thane considers mentally that he does not wish to participate in evil deeds, unless it is to someone who had behaved badly to him first. Swithun, on reading the man's mind, warns him to follow the example of Christ, who would do ill to no one. On receiving this lesson, the thane travels to Winchester to pray devoutly to Swithun and is instantly healed. He then reports the miracle to Æthelwold, and, Ælfric tells us, it is then that Lantfred composes his account. At this point in the narrative, Ælfric has not only succeeded in bringing the saint to life through his visionary appearance and mini-sermon to the thane, but he has also grounded the miracle in historical truth by recounting its relation to Æthelwold and subsequent composition by Lantfred. The mini-sermon, based on Romans 12. 20, acts as a blueprint for the Christian: good deeds and neighbourliness are essential; this is enhanced by Swithun's focus in his mini-sermon on the additional necessity of pious and neighbourly thoughts.

Æthelwold's reception of the thane in this episode is typical of the Bishop's behaviour throughout the narrative. His accessibility to those who come to speak

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[62] 'who was thrown out of the Old Minster with the other priests by Bishop Æthelwold because of their evil ways?' Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, p. 260, n. 42, comments that this event 'was seen by contemporaries as a crucial event in the establishment of reformed Benedictine monasticism in tenth-century England'.

[63] *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 64, line 51; 'he would not obey his commands with action'.

[64] The Latin texts have 'he did not wish to obey [Swithun's] commands': Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 262–63 and 566–67.

[65] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 23, pp. 602–05, based on Lantfred, chapter 35.

to him, from Eadsige with the initial revelation to the 'certain good man' who is directed to Æthelwold by Swithun to reveal the Old Minster monks' neglect of their duties,[66] echoes the accessibility of Swithun to all those who come to him seeking his assistance. This particular episode concerning the monks' duties is of critical importance in understanding the reform-context of the account of Swithun, and of Ælfric's role both as recorder of events and indeed as participant.

Ælfric narrates that Æthelwold commanded the monks of Old Minster to sing the *Te Deum* as the appointed hymn of praise as and when Swithun performed miracles. However, the monks soon abandoned this practice, which was disturbing their sleep, when Æthelwold was absent on business at the king's court. A man who has a vision of Swithun declaiming against the monks' laziness is sent by the saint to tell Æthelwold of the monks' negligence. Æthelwold rebukes the monks, and they take up the practice of singing the *Te Deum* once again.[67] Swithun, as a reforming bishop, is seen working in close liaison with the archetypal reformer, Æthelwold, to ensure the dedication and obedience of those within the monastery and the positive Christian behaviour of those without. This divine support — God working through his saint in the encouragement of Æthelwold's work — lends the most significant authority to the reform; the account itself both reflects the actions of Æthelwold and contributes to his, and his minster's, reputation.

Ælfric, intervening in the narrative at this point, confirms as an eyewitness and participant the truth of his own account:

> Hi hit heoldon þa siððan symle on gewunan, swa swa we gesawon sylfe foroft, and þone sang we sungon unseldon mid heom.[68]

Here, Ælfric personally confirms that the monks of Winchester did indeed continue with the custom of singing the *Te Deum*, as ordered by their bishop, to praise every miracle performed by Swithun; through the use of the temporal adverbs *unseldon* and *foroft*, he emphasizes how regularly this practice took place,

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[66] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 17, pp. 598–601, based on Lantfred, chapter 10, and *Epitome*, chapter 14. This chapter is particularly interesting from a gender-based angle: in Lantfred, Swithun appears to a woman, who reports his words to Æthelwold. In the Old English version and the *Epitome*, the female visionary becomes male.

[67] *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, pp. 70–72, lines 186–219.

[68] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 17, pp. 588–601: 'They always maintained it regularly afterwards, as I myself have very often seen; and I frequently sang the hymn with them.' As Lapidge points out at p. 600, n. 43, this personal statement by Ælfric is his own addition to his Latin sources.

though, it seems, in the past and not in the present.[69] Indirectly, then, not only does Ælfric raise the status of the saint by the number of times the canticle has to be sung,[70] but he also raises his own authorial status to that of direct observer. This serves conclusively to verify the events being described and simultaneously emphasizes Ælfric's closeness to the saint and to the monks at Old Minster. While Ælfric's participation in the singing of the *Te Deum*, his self-inscription into the hagiographic account, authorizes the saint's miraculous powers, then so too does the saint's spiritual proximity to Ælfric enhance his own status as author. However, it is interesting to note how this authorization of the miraculous is rather more indirect than it appears to be. While Ælfric declares that he has both seen the practice of singing the hymn and participated in singing it himself, he does not explicitly state that this was as a specific consequence of a preceding miracle that he had seen at firsthand. While he thus appears to be providing an empirical account of the saint's acts throughout much of the narrative, it is perhaps a less authenticating testimony than it might seem.

So it is that in the account of Swithun's posthumous miracles, occurring within Ælfric's own lifetime, there is a sense of involvement that is lacking from some of his other saints' lives, such as the lives of St Æthelthryth and St Alban. In these latter lives, not only are the saints long dead, but they are also figures who, while celebrated by the Benedictine monks in their offices, were not local to Ælfric in the way that Swithun was. The contemporaneity of Swithun's reforming miracles adds to the immediacy of the text and the importance of those within it. Contributing also to the reputation of the saint and his allies are the additions that Ælfric makes to his source materials that consolidate his authority as homilist and didact. Following the miracle episode mentioned above, where Swithun appears to the crippled thane in a vision teaching him what truly admirable Christian behaviour consists of, Ælfric adds a unique short admonition about the reliability of dreams: 'Þa swefna beoð wynsume þe gewurðaþ of

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[69] In the *Epitome*, Ælfric (if he is the author as Lapidge suggests) states of Æthelwold's instruction to the monks, 'quod ita deinceps hactenus obseruatum audiuimus' ('I have heard that this commandment has been kept from that time up to the present': Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 572–73). In the Old English account, the source's hearsay has been transformed into a firsthand experience, but one which seems situated in the recent past. This adds to the sense of the shifting time-frame within the text: a deliberate structural technique, it seems.

[70] Ruth Waterhouse, 'Discourse and Hypersignification in Two of Ælfric's Saints' Lives', in *Holy Men, Holy Women*, ed. by Szarmach, pp. 333–52 (p. 349, n. 6), highlights that at this point in the account, Ælfric switches from third person plural to first person plural 'we'.

Gode and þa beoð egefulle ðe of þam deofle cumað.'[71] Ælfric warns that Christians should not place too much trust in dreams, for that is how, at times, the devil attempts to betray the faithful. Similarly, Ælfric, in another addition to his sources, warns the reader or listener against placing the saints above God in their worship, for it is only as intercessors that the saints can assist believers.[72] These personal interventions in the narrative function to provide relevant homiletic interludes within the narration; they presumably indicate and seek to reform then current un-Christian practices and beliefs; clearly, they add to the reforming impetus present throughout the text.[73]

Reflections of the reality of reform in tenth-century Winchester and its environs permeate this text; the saint depicted becomes the divine supporter of Æthelwold, Ælfric, and their contemporaries. The close relationship between the secular ruler, Edgar, and his ecclesiastical officers is mirrored in the saint's miraculous intervention in legal cases, where miscarriages of justice are put right by holy intercession. When a man blinded and deafened by mutilation resulting from a false accusation of stealing prays to Swithun, his eyesight and his hearing are restored.[74] Previously in the narrative, a serving woman, due to be whipped for a minor offence, prays throughout the night to Swithun for help. At the singing of lauds, her fetters fall from her feet, and she runs to the minster to thank Swithun. Her lord, upon discovering this miracle, frees her immediately 'for

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[71] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 24, pp. 604–05: 'Those dreams which emanate from God are joyful, and those which come from the devil are fearful.' *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 78, lines 341–42.

[72] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 19, pp. 600–01; *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 73, lines 235–40.

[73] There are other interpolations, such as Ælfric's warning against those who fool around while keeping vigil by a corpse. See Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 19, pp. 600–01, and *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, p. 74, lines 254–62. This follows immediately upon a miracle where a man keeping vigil mocked Swithun's efficacy and was rendered unconscious until he was carried to the tomb where he confessed and was restored to health. Swithun is less a rewarding saint here, than a punisher of wrong-doing directed against himself.

[74] This episode (*Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, pp. 72–73, lines 220–35) is discussed using Lantfred's lengthier account of it by Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, vol. I: *Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 125–26, where it is treated as possible evidence for actual legal practice in this period. Ælfric, in comparison with Lantfred, very much curtails the information he gives about the wronged man's mutilation.

Swyðunes wurðmynte'.[75] Such miracles once again provide reward for those who pray ceaselessly to Swithun, and particularly those who are wronged by secular law, or who are moved to reform themselves as a result of their contact with the saint. The efficacy of the saint's interventions serves to highlight and enhance the work of the reformers, within both the ecclesiastical sphere and the secular, and this cooperation between monarch and prelate results in the creation of a glorious age of regeneration and peace lauded by Ælfric in his narrative framework.

Not only does the reform movement provide the chronological setting for the text, but it also provides the shaping force behind Ælfric's own work and intellectual heritage. The motivation for including Swithun in his *Lives of Saints* is complex: part personal devotion to his *alma mater*'s patron; part determination to raise the already considerable status of Winchester by the acts of its major saint; part political, in the sense that the commissioners of the *Lives of Saints* were Wessex ealdormen who would surely have been enthused in Winchester's favour by their reading of the contemporary miracles occurring there; and part eulogistic — not only of the saint himself, but also of those whose glorious work on behalf of the monastic lifestyle had brought about this God-given reward in the shape of the saint and his miracle-working.

This narrative of the miracles performed with extraordinary fervour by Swithun thus becomes a much larger issue than simply the zealous attempts at dissemination of a local cult by the local hagiographer, Ælfric. It is a narrative that mirrors and comments upon the achievements of the reformers, set within a national context and authorized by the authenticating presence of the hagiographer himself. Ælfric implies that the events depicted in his account could not have occurred without the cleansing of the monastery brought about by the reforms of Æthelwold. Swithun's miracles are a reward that set the Benedictine reform within the context of divine approbation, with some of the glory reflecting upon the author himself. Thus a text containing details of the miraculous, usually so reductively defined as 'hagiography', is more properly both a chronicle and a persuasive document: part of the surviving evidence for the period, simultaneously reflecting and creating history through its mix of reality, truth, historical and homiletic discourse, and hagiographic metanarrative.[76]

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[75] Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, chapter 12, pp. 596–97 (based on Lantfred, chapter 6): 'in honour of Swithun'. *Lives of Three English Saints*, ed. by Needham, pp. 68–69, lines 138–48.

FOLKLORE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: ORAL STORIES AND THE WRITING OF ANGLO-SAXON HISTORY

Catherine Cubitt

In 1961, Kenneth Jackson published his Gregynog Lecture, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*, in which he discussed the presence of motifs and stories from folklore in Welsh literature.[1] Such a line of enquiry was not necessarily new in scholarship of the Celtic literatures: as long ago as 1910 Charles Plummer had included an account of 'heathen folklore and mythology' in his edition of Irish Saints Lives.[2] Students of medieval Scandinavian literatures have also long studied the oral traditions embedded in their texts.[3] But popular oral or folkloric material in Anglo-Saxon writings, whether in Latin or in Old English, has not figured highly in scholarly study.[4] The result

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[1] K. H. Jackson, *The International Popular Tale and Early Welsh Tradition*, Gregynog Lectures 1961 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961).

[2] *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. by C. Plummer, 2 vols (Oxford, 1910), I, pp. cxxix–clxxxviii. And see, for example, T. Peete Cross, *Motif-Index of Early Irish Literature*, Indiana University Press Folklore Series, 7 (Bloomington, 1952); D. A. Bray, 'The Study of Folk-Motifs in Early Irish Hagiography: Problems of Approach and Rewards at Hand', in *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars*, ed. by J. Carey, M. Herbert, and P. Ó Riain (Dublin, 2001), pp. 268–77. On Breton material, see B. Merdrignac, 'Folklore and Hagiography: A Semiotic Approach to the Legend of the Immortals of Landevennec', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 13 (1987), 73–86, and see also J. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany, *c.* 850–1250', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 309–43.

[3] See, for example, I. M. Boberg, *Motif-Index of Early Icelandic Literature* (Copenhagen, 1966).

[4] See now C. Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity: Revisiting the Cult of Murdered and Martyred Anglo-Saxon Royal Saints', *Early Medieval Europe*, 9 (2000), 53–83 (pp. 66–77); J. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Local Saints and Local*

of this lack of interest is manifold; it not only affects the understanding of textuality and orality in early medieval England but also has tended to reinforce an image of the Anglo-Saxon world as different from its Celtic and Scandinavian neighbours. This essay has two aims, to examine some of the evidence for popular oral stories in Anglo-Saxon England and to explore reasons why this material has been neglected, that is, to set the oral stories of early England in the context of the narratives which have dominated Anglo-Saxon studies.

By oral popular stories I mean folk tales, stories which circulated orally and were transmitted not primarily through learned and written sources.[5] Jackson preferred the term 'international popular tale' to 'folk tale' since the latter appeared to distinguish too nicely between literary and folk tales. The classic guides to such literature are Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's *Types of the Folktale* and Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, which effectively but not exhaustively define the type of material I mean and its corpus.[6] Stories of this type are embedded in three Latin hagiographies from reformed Benedictine circles, and these form the core of this essay: the *Vita et Miracula sancti Kenelmi*, the *Passio Eadmundi* by Abbo of Fleury, and Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita sancti Ecgwini*. The most extensive oral story is found in the first of these, the *passio* of Kenelm.

The Vita et Miracula sancti Kenelmi

The *Vita et Miracula sancti Kenelmi* was written between 1066 and 1075 by an anonymous hagiographer, probably Goscelin of St Bertin. The story of Kenelm's

Churches in the Early Medieval West, ed. by A. Thacker and R. Sharpe (Oxford, 2002), pp. 455–565 (pp. 479–86). For the use of folk tale in the Middle Ages, see J. M. Ziolkowski, 'A Fairy Tale from before Fairy Tales: Egbert of Liege's "De puella a lupellis seruata" and the Medieval Background of "Little Red Riding Hood"', *Speculum*, 67 (1992), 549–75; 'The Spirit of Play in the Poetry of St Gall', in *Sangallensia in Washington: The Arts and Letters in Medieval and Baroque St. Gall Viewed from the Late Twentieth Century,* ed. by J. C. King (Frankfurt, 1993), pp. 143–69. For folklore in other later medieval genres, see also for example, D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 113–23.

[5] For a definition of folklore, see J. Simpson and S. Roud's preface to *A Dictionary of English Folklore* (Oxford, 2000), p. i; G. Anderson, *Fairytale in the Ancient World* (London, 2000), p. i; J. McNamara, 'Bede's Role in Circulating Legend in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*', *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History*, 7 (1994), 61–69 (pp. 61–63).

[6] Antti Aarne, *Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography. Antti Aarne's Verzeichnis der Märchentypen*, trans. and enlarged by Stith Thompson, FF Communications, 184 (Helsinki, 1964); Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*, 6 vols (Bloomington, 1966).

life and murder and of his posthumous miracles must pre-date this account since a short version, the *Vita brevior*, describes the main features of the saint's killing and probably dates from the early eleventh century. Kenelm himself lived in the early ninth century; little is known of him beyond a handful of charter attestations. There is no evidence outside the hagiography to suggest that he was murdered. It is likely that a cult of the young prince had been in existence for some time before 969, the date of the revival of the monastery at Winchcombe by Bishop Oswald of Worcester for which house the anonymous *Vita et Miracula* was written.[7]

Structurally the *Vita* divides into three sections: the short preface, the *passio* itself (chapters 1–17), and a final section recording the *miracula* which took place after Kenelm's translation to Winchcombe (chapters 18–31). Chapter 17 acts as a bridge between the *passio* and the *miracula* sections by announcing the inclusion of 'pauca ex multis moderni et nostri temporis'.[8] The form of the *Vita Kenelmi* is therefore conventional enough in hagiographical terms, although the content of the *passio* is much less so. This may be why the preface is so insistent on the numerous, written and oral, witnesses behind the hagiography. Right at the beginning, the author declares how Kenelm's murder and sanctity are known throughout England. The miraculous letter given to the Pope which revealed his secret burial is read 'per totam patriam'[9] while the oral testimony used by the author is derived from ancient and faithful men who themselves learnt it from their seniors.[10] One of these, a monk at Worcester, was a disciple of Archbishop Oswald of York. The trustworthiness of Kenelm's sanctity is guaranteed by his veneration by the three Benedictine reformers, Oswald, Dunstan of Canterbury, and Æthelwold of Winchester. The author reports that a copy of Kenelm's *passio* is said to be preserved in Paris and that Queen Edith, wife of Edward the Confessor, also reported to him that she had read clear evidence of his sanctity. More

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[7] *Vita et Miracula Sancti Kenelmi*, in *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives*, ed. by R. C. Love (Oxford, 1996), pp. 49–89, pp. lxxxix–cxiii (hereafter *VMSK*). All translations are taken from this edition. See also A. Thacker, 'Kings, Saints, and Monasteries in Pre-Viking Mercia', *Midland History*, 10 (1985), 1–25 (pp. 8–12). See now also M. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 614–21, on the attribution of the *Vita* to Goscelin.

[8] *VMSK*, preface, chapter 1, chapter 17, pp. 50–53, 72–73: 'a few of the many miracles of modern times and of our own time'.

[9] *VMSK*, pp. 50–51: 'throughout the entire land'.

[10] *VMSK*, pp. 50–51: 'Inter plures testes etiam ueteranos fideles ab antiquioribus deductos.'

stories are recorded in 'cantilena et Anglica scripta'.[11] Kenelm's sanctity is there-
fore attested by his fame, his acceptance by the most venerable and indeed saintly
figures of the recent Church, the great reforming bishops, and by the former
queen herself. These conventional statements indicate that the author's witnesses
are unimpeachable and his tradition derives from the most authoritative oral and
written sources — aged monks, miraculous texts, and other writings.

The story that follows on the preface bears the imprint of its long oral gesta-
tion. On the death of his father, King Cenwulf of Mercia, the young prince
Kenelm was left as heir to the kingdom of Mercia. He possessed two sisters,
Burgenhild, who loved her brother dearly, and Cwoenthryth, his assassin. Kenelm
was handsome, virtuous, and universally loved, but his sister Cwoenthryth was
wicked and jealous of her brother so she plotted with his tutor, Æscberht, to
have him murdered, promising the tutor a share in his kingdom. One day,
Kenelm dreamt that he saw at the foot of his bed a tree that reached up to the
sky and that he was standing on its top. Suddenly, the marvellous tree was cut
down, but the boy escaped in the form of a bird. His nurse interpreted the
dream for him, telling him that his wicked sister was plotting against him. Sure
enough, when Æscberht and the boy were out together hunting in the woods,
the tutor decided to carry out his plan and he dug a grave for the boy. The
Prince refused to be killed there and planted his stick into the ground which
then turned itself into a great tree. Æscberht, filled with fury, dragged the boy
away and cut off his head in a nearby valley. The decapitated boy caught his
severed head in his hands, and a white dove was seen flying through the valley.
Æscberht tried to conceal the grave, but his crime was revealed — a white cow
abandoned her usual pasture for the Prince's valley and returned home each day
with a miraculous yield of milk. Moreover, the place where she grazed never
ceased to be lush and wondrously fertile and became known as Cow Valley.
Cwoenthryth, now queen of the kingdom, passed a decree that no one should
look for the Prince or even mention his name. But her wickedness was revealed
by a letter delivered by dove to Pope Leo during High Mass in Rome which
related where the boy was buried. The Pope demanded that a search should be
made for the grave, and as the turf was raised from his burial place, a miraculous
stream burst forth. Cwoenthryth was furious as she saw the boy's body being
brought to the church and tried to prevent this through witchcraft, by reading
Psalm 108 backwards. But her spell was turned against her, and her eyes fell out
leaving to this day a bloody stain upon the psalter she used. Cwoenthryth died

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[11] *VMSK*, pp. 50–51: 'a song and writings in English'.

shortly afterwards but could not be buried in consecrated ground. It was reported that 'a shining child' appeared to a man and instructed that her body should be thrown into a gully.

The plot and setting of Kenelm's murder, with his wicked sister, her offer of a share in the kingdom, and the child's killing while out hunting in the forest, remind the reader more of the tales recorded by the Brothers Grimm than the saints' lives of Anglo-Saxon hagiographers like Bede or Wulfstan of Winchester. Many of its incidents can be traced in the Stith Thompson index of folk motifs. Kenelm's dream of the tree which he finds himself on top of, for example, may have some kinship with a number of folk tales, possibly including the story type of Jack and the Beanstalk.[12] Numerous folklore motifs put forward the notion that a murder cannot be concealed and that earth and nature will expose the foul deed. The cow's miraculous yield of milk is another common folklore feature. Rosalind Love has pointed out that Cwoenthryth's vain attempt to prevent the recovery of his corpse by chanting a psalm backwards is best paralleled in folk motifs where performing an action backwards has magical powers. Her punishment by the loss of her eyes could also be regarded as another.[13]

The *Vita* appears to represent the accretion of oral stories and incidents around the core story of the murder of the young prince. The tale of the murder itself cannot readily be traced among recorded popular stories, but it is possible that one or more such tales may underlie it. John Blair has pointed to the 'story of the Juniper tree' in which a boy is murdered by his stepmother. His bones (the corpse having been fed to his father) are rescued by his beloved sister who buries them beneath a juniper tree, out of which a beautiful bird emerges and flies away.[14] There are numerous tales where the hero is transformed into a bird or in which a murdered child is reincarnated as a bird. Kenelm's murder story as we have it contains many loose ends which may be traces of other stories. In this way, it would be akin to Old English heroic poetry which does not develop a (to modern eyes) coherent narrative and which may embrace a number of different storylines or plots.[15] The *Vita sancti Kenelmi*, for example, starts with

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[12] See the Appendix below for a list of the motifs.

[13] *VMSK*, pp. 70–73, n. 3.

[14] See Blair, 'Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 481–82. See also E. Simmons Greenhill, 'The Child in the Tree: A Study of the Cosmological Tree in Christian Tradition', *Traditio*, 10 (1954), 323–71.

[15] A. Bonjour, *Digressions in Beowulf* (Oxford, 1950); F. C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, 1985).

a statement that Kenelm had two sisters, Burgenhild and Cwoenthryth, one virtuous and one wicked. Nothing more is heard of the virtuous Burgenhild.[16] Similarly, Æscberht's first failed murder attempt when Kenelm's grave is dug but the child refuses to be buried there delays rather than advances the story. Æscberht himself fades out half way through the story; he is merely the agent of Cwoenthryth's hatred for her brother, and yet it is curious that he never reappears even to be suitably punished. A possible tale type which could have provided the model for the Kenelm narrative is the tale of the murdered innocent in which the protagonist is usually female.[17] Here the innocent heroine arouses the jealousy of a female persecutor, usually a stepmother but sometimes a sister, who orders a third party to murder the heroine in a wood. This attempt fails, but after the victim has taken refuge elsewhere, there is a further apparently successful attack from which, however, the heroine is ultimately revived.[18] Elements of the *Vita* fit this pattern: Kenelm is an innocent who arouses the jealousy of his close kin and is murdered by a third party in the woods. The unsuccessful murder attempt could underlie Æscberht's failure to kill Kenelm at the first place chosen. Kenelm's transformation from Mercian prince to heavenly saint could represent a successful resuscitation of his corpse, although this is rather fanciful. On this reading, it might be that Burgenhild was the original subject of the story and victim of her sister's jealousy. It is intriguing to note that, according to Anderson, this story type (AT 709) is related to another tale, AT 451, in which the heroine's brothers are driven out of the kingdom and changed into birds or animals and the princess goes in search of them.[19] It is possible that stories of this type concerned with an innocent and persecuted heroine served as the models for the telling of Kenelm's story.

The *Vita et Miracula sancti Kenelmi* interweaves hagiographical topoi, textual allusions with toponymic and topographical lore concerning the story of Kenelm's murder, the discovery of his secret burial, and the divine punishment of his sister. Local elements feature strongly in the work, seen very clearly in the episodes concerning Kenelm's murder, the story of Cow Valley, and the miraculous ash trees and springs which spring up where his body rested. The author

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[16] Love, *VMSK*, pp. 54–55, n. 1, suggests that Burgenhild is an invention to act as a foil for Cwoenthryth.

[17] Aarne, *Types of the Folktale*, AT 709.

[18] AT 709 can include some element of prophecy of the victim's death.

[19] Anderson, *Fairytale*, pp. 43–60 (p. 58); Aarne, *Types of the Folktale*, AT 451.

has taken care to localize the details of the story and of the posthumous miracles. Kenelm's nurse, for example, is said to come from Winchcombe. The *Vita's* author underlines the truthfulness of his story by referring to the continuing presence and miraculous powers of some of the local sites in his story, for example, Kenelm's ash tree, the healing spring at his first grave, or even, most sensationally, the psalter with the bloody signs of Cwoenthryth's lost eyes.[20] Local place-names are also adduced as evidence of the veracity of events.[21]

These elements are combined with learned Christian traditions; for example, in chapter 1, the saint is described as a model holy child 'puer [. . .] speciosus forma et illustrante superna gratia amabilis Deo et hominibus florebat [. . .]', a topos of a fledgling saint.[22] His dream of the tree is reminiscent of a similar vision in Wulfstan of Winchester's *Vita sancti Æthelwoldi* where the future greatness of the saint is foretold.[23] The contest between the men of Gloucester and Worcester is acknowledged to be like that between Tours and Poitiers for St Martin's body.[24] Kenelm is made to recite the *Te Deum* as he is killed, arriving at the words 'Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus' as he expires.[25] Kenelm's story is also situated within the authority of the Bible: Cwoenthryth is compared to Herodias, Jezebel, and Cain; Æscberht is Judas Iscariot, and Kenelm himself a second Joseph. The oral and textual elements are woven into the *Vita* without distinction between their origins. Within the *passio*, some events are recounted with phrases like 'describitur', 'creditur', 'ut dictum est', and 'asseritur', but these phrases could refer to either oral or written testimony.[26] Such phrases are used less in the *miracula* where many miracles take place at public gatherings, such as the local court, or in the witness of the Winchcombe monks.[27]

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[20] *VMSK*, chapters 6, 13, 16, pp. 58–59, 68–69, 70–73; and see chapter 15, pp. 70–71.

[21] *VMSK*, chapter 9, pp. 62–63.

[22] *VMSK*, chapter 1, pp. 54–55: 'the boy [. . .] flourished among the bright offspring of the English, handsome in appearance, and, illumined by heavenly grace, pleasing to God and to men'.

[23] See, for example, *Wulfstan of Winchester, The Life of St Æthelwold*, ed. and trans. by M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991), chapter 38, pp. 56–57. The image of the tree in a dream is derived ultimately from Daniel 4.

[24] *VMSK,* chapter 14, pp. 68–71.

[25] *VMSK*, chapter 8, pp. 60–63.

[26] *VMSK*, chapters 4, 7–8, pp. 56–63.

[27] *VMSK*, chapters 18–19, pp. 72–75, local court cases; chapters 21–22, 24, 26–27, 31, pp. 78–79, 80–89, witness of the abbots or community.

Despite this interweaving of written and oral sources, it is the imprint of traditional stories and motifs which remains as the most outstanding feature of the Life of Kenelm, and yet it has occasioned relatively little comment until very recently.[28] Scholarship has concentrated upon the authorship of the *Vita*, its use as an exemplar for monastic oblates, and the political implications of Kenelm's and other royal martyr cults.[29] The fine recent edition by Rosalind Love, which meticulously gathers the evidence for the cult of Kenelm and collects a number of the folkloric parallels, focuses upon the hagiographical and liturgical context of the Life. Love remarks upon the oral gestation of the myth but, as a student of Anglo-Latinity, is more concerned with the Life's textuality.

The Passio sancti Eadmundi

A somewhat similar fate has befallen the *Passio sancti Eadmundi*. This records another cult which underwent a long period of oral transmission before being committed to writing. It was written in 985x8 by Abbo of Fleury for the monks of Ramsey from information told to Archbishop Dunstan by Edmund's own armour-bearer, then an old man at the court of Athelstan.[30] The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the death of King Edmund of East Anglia in 869 in battle with the Vikings.[31] The *Passio* describes how Edmund refused to surrender to the Vikings who then put him to death. Edmund was bound to a tree, transfixed by arrows so that he resembled a hedgehog. His persecutors then inflicted upon his corpse the indignity of decapitation to ensure that he could not be buried whole. His faithful countrymen came out of hiding after his slaughter and were grieved

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[28] Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity'; Blair, 'Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 476–86.

[29] D. Rollason, 'The Cults of Murdered Royal Saints in Anglo-Saxon England, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 11 (1983), 1–22; Thacker, 'Kings, Saints, and Monasteries', pp. 8–12; P. A. Hayward, 'The Idea of Innocent Martyrdom in Late Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Studies in Church History*, 30 (1993), 81–82.

[30] Abbo of Fleury, *Passio sancti Eadmundi*, published in *Three Lives of English Saints*, ed. by M. Winterbottom (Toronto, 1972), pp. 65–87. M. Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury: A Study of the Ideas about Society and Law of the Tenth-Century Monastic Reform Movement* (Hilversum, 1987), pp. 40–45, proposes a date of 987x988 for the *Vita*'s composition, and suggests that it was finished in Fleury. A. Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's Passio S. Eadmundi', *Revue Bénédictine*, 105 (1995), 20–78.

[31] *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel with Supplementary Extracts from the Others: A Revised Text*, ed. by C. Plummer and J. Earle, 2 vols (Oxford, 1892–99), *s.a.* 870 (*r.* 869).

that only his headless body could be given a fitting burial. Searching for the head, they were alerted to its whereabouts by its cries of 'Her, her, her' and it was discovered between the paws of a wolf, hidden in a thornbush. This story is well known to and has delighted generations of undergraduates through Ælfric's version.[32] It may be that this familiarity has blunted the impact of the outlandish aspects of the story, the speaking head and its lupine custodian. There are no close hagiographical models for these elements, and they must derive from a lively oral tradition.[33]

Paradoxically, discussion of Edmund's legend has tended to see its oral transmission as a guarantor of reliability. Great weight has been put upon the account given by Abbo of his sources: the chain of storytelling from the armour-bearer to Archbishop Dunstan to Abbo himself. In her scrupulous examination of the earliest traditions about Edmund, Dorothy Whitelock remarked 'normally an account of so much later date would be viewed with suspicion, particularly if it is at variance with earlier sources. But the authority Abbo claims is unusually detailed.'[34] She calculated that if the armour-bearer had been a young man or boy when he served under Edmund, it was just feasible for him to have been alive when Athelstan came to the throne and Dunstan was a member of his court. Whitelock accordingly regarded the *Passio* as authoritative tradition and even preferred its account of Edmund's martyrdom in captivity over the contemporary witness of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which suggests that the East Anglian King was killed in battle.[35] In assessing Abbo's account, Whitelock considers only the description of Edmund's capture and murder, ignoring the posthumous miracles. Edmund's passion is thus shorn of its fantastic elements although they are integral to the story — the King's decapitation and the villainous concealment of his head were necessary for its miraculous recovery. His murder includes folkloric elements, and the attribution of the narrative to an old man who had fought with Edmund may itself be a storyteller's convention seen also, for example, in Notker's *Gesta Karoli Magni* where an aged layman who had

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[32] *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints*, ed. by W. Skeat, 2 vols, EETS, o.s., 76, 82, 94, 114 (1881–85, 1890–1900), II (1890–1900), 314–35; Ælfric reports that more miracles were talked about than he records, see below, p. 204.

[33] Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio*', pp. 37–38, postulates a number of textual parallels which do not seem to me to be convincing.

[34] D. Whitelock, 'Fact and Fiction in the Legend of St Edmund', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, 31 (for 1969), 217–33 (pp. 218, 221–22).

[35] Whitelock, 'Fact and Fiction', pp. 217–18, 221.

served alongside his master in fighting the Huns is recorded as a source.[36] Whitelock's evaluation of the Edmund legend and its historical core has largely been followed by subsequent historians while Abbo's *Passio* has been examined as a source for royal and monastic ideology.[37] The insights which it provides into storytelling and orality in pre-Conquest England have been neglected.

The Vita sancti Ecgwini

The final text to be discussed in this section, the *Vita sancti Ecgwini* was composed by Byrthferth of Ramsey in the first half of the eleventh century. Byrhtferth who, like his teacher Abbo, was one of the leading scholars of his day, wrote this account of the eighth-century Bishop of Worcester and founder of the first monastery at Evesham for the monks there. He uses material from both documentary and oral sources, explicitly citing ancient charters and the report of faithful men at the beginning of his *Vita*.[38] However, he possessed only a few documents, some charters and the letter of St Boniface to Æthelbald of Mercia which Byrhtferth misattributes to Pope Boniface and King Eadbald of Kent. These meagre resources were padded out with Byrhtferth's copious learning to create the *Vita*.[39]

Two stories of oral origin are recounted which have been well discussed by Michael Lapidge.[40] In the first, Ecgwine travels to Rome, having placed fetters upon himself in England and thrown away the key. This is miraculously found when a fish is caught in the River Tiber. As Lapidge points out, the motif of finding of a lost object in a fish is a very ancient one, first recorded by Herodotus. The second story is more elaborate and seems to draw upon local tales. Ecgwine is given a wood which he divides into four and sets under four swineherds — two pairs of brothers, Eoves and Ympa, Trottuc and Cornuc. Eoves's

[36] Notker Balbulus, *Gesta Karoli Magni imperatoris*, ed. by H. F. Haefele, MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum, n.s., 12 (Berlin, 1959), II, preface, and II, chapter 1, pp. 48–50.

[37] Mostert, *Political Theology*; Hayward, 'Idea of Innocent Martyrdom'.

[38] *Original Lives of Anglo-Saxons and Others who Lived before the Conquest*, ed. by [John Allen] Giles (London, 1854), pp. 349–96. See M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita S. Ecgwini*', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London, 1993), pp. 293–315.

[39] *Vita sancti Ecgwini*, in *Original Lives of Anglo-Saxons*, ed. by Giles, p. 350, and see M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth', in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England,* ed. by M. Lapidge and others (Oxford, 1999), pp. 78–79 (p. 78).

[40] Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita*', pp. 308–10.

pig, which is pregnant, goes missing for a number of days, much to the consternation of her custodian. When eventually she reappears, she has given birth to seven piglets. This happens on a second occasion, when another seven piglets are born, all white except for their ears and feet. On the third occasion, she is found by Eoves with nine piglets, and her discovery reveals the vision of the Virgin Mary on the site where the monastery is eventually built. Parallels to this story can be found in Celtic tales where pigs reveal the sites of important places and in classical tradition where Vergil records that the site of Rome was shown by a white sow and her piglets.[41] The three porcine disappearances are indicative of the folklore origins with its fondness for triads. The pairing of the four swineherds into two pairs of brothers may also have popular roots. The names of the four appear to embody local tradition; Lapidge traces them in place-names in the neighbourhood: Trotshill, near Worcester, Ympney near Droitwich, *Cronuchomme*, and Evesham itself. Lapidge suggests that the names of the swineherds recall historical persons, noting the appearance of one Truttoc in two charters for Evesham.[42] However, it is also possible that these names were toponymically derived and represent back formations. The name Eoves, for example, appears to have been formed from Evesham, since it is not a nominative form of the name, but the genitive singular, precisely as the compounded form in the place-name.[43] Local toponymy may have been the seed from which these stories grew. The *Vita sancti Ecgwini* contains one more story for which an oral origin can be hypothesized: after Ecgwine's death, a local peasant attempts to appropriate some of the monastery's land. The peasant is required to prove his entitlement by swearing an oath upon the relics themselves at the property claimed. He attempts to play a trick upon the abbot and saint by lining his boots with his own soil so that he can truthfully swear that he owns the earth upon which he stands. Needless to say, the saint is not deceived: the peasant is struck dead by his own hand, decapitated by his scythe.[44] This story is reminiscent of the trickster, a common folk hero, and of stories where the hero is enabled to swear a truthful oath by a

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[41] Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita*', pp. 309–10, 311–12 and n. 73.

[42] Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita*', pp. 309–10; S 54 and 79.

[43] A. Mawer and F. M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Worcestershire* (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 262–63.

[44] Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the *Vita*', p. 307, sees this as perhaps deriving from an eye-witness account. See, too, A. Thacker, 'Saint-Making and Relic Collecting by Oswald and his Communities', in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. by N. Brooks and C. Cubitt (London, 1996), pp. 244–84 (pp. 261–62).

little sleight of hand.[45] Like the wonder stories of the *Passio Kenelmi*, these oral stories may represent storytelling among the local people, laity and religious, concerning their neighbourhood holy man. But they are reworked by Byrhtferth according to his own erudite and idiosyncratic tastes. His fondness for number symbolism can be traced in the pig's miraculously fertile litters of seven and nine piglets, the folkloric triads of the porcine hunts probably also have Trinitarian significance, and Byrhtferth turns Ecgwine into the biblical hard task master from Matthew's Gospel, chastising Eoves for his negligence.[46] Folkloric and learned are again seamlessly reworked together.

Oral Stories and Reformed Monasticism

Ramsey, along with the cathedral of Worcester, provides a common link between these three hagiographies, the lives of Kenelm, Edmund, and Ecgwine. The monastery at Ramsey was the core community in the programme of monastic re-foundations launched by Bishop Oswald of Worcester. Established in the region of his family lands in 966, it became a major centre of learning and served as a refuge for monks of his other houses when these fell into difficulties. Abbo sojourned there from 985 to 987 (when he must have taught Byrhtferth) and it may have been there that he composed the *Passio Eadmundi*.[47] Both Winchcombe and Evesham were dependencies of Worcester: the former was certainly reformed by Oswald as a Benedictine house and the latter possibly so.[48] Both suffered from the attacks of Ealdorman Ælfhere after the death of Edgar in 975, and we know that the monks of Winchcombe and their abbot Germanus sought refuge at

[45] Thompson, *Motif-Index*, A 521, Q 591.1.1, and see *Medieval Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs and Customs*, ed. by C. Lindahl and others, 2 vols (Santa Barbara, 2000), II, 994–99.

[46] Matthew 25. 14–30.

[47] J. Blair, 'Ramsey', in *Blackwell Encyclopedia*, ed. by Lapidge and others, pp. 385–86. Thacker, 'Saint-Making', pp. 244–68 (pp. 256–62). M. Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Early Sections of the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 317–42 (p. 335).

[48] D. Cox, 'St Oswald of Worcester at Evesham Abbey: Cult and Concealment', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 53 (2002), 269–85; J. Barrow, 'Wulfstan and Worcester: Bishop and Clergy in the Early Eleventh Century', in *Wulfstan of York*, ed. by M. Townend (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 141–59 (pp. 151–52). D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 50; Thacker, 'Saint-Making', pp. 260–63.

Ramsey (their original community).[49] The history of Evesham in this period is obscure, but it appears that in the 990s it fell under the control of Bishop Eadulf of Worcester; in about 1014 it received a new abbot, Ælfweard, a monk from Ramsey, who may have commissioned Byrhtferth's *Vita*.

The use of local oral tradition was not necessarily axiomatic. Faced with the occupational hazard of impoverished biographical resources, many hagiographers would have re-created their subjects according to the models provided by earlier texts, such as Sulpicius Severus's account of St Martin, or by borrowing miracles from the Gospels or from the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great. Abbo, Byrhtferth, and the author of the *Vita sancti Kenelmi* seem to have deliberately eschewed this approach: it is notable that they do not even use stock textual miracles to supplement their oral sources. The *passio* section of the *Vita Kenelmi*, for example, abounds with wonder stories but not with conventional healing miracles. Further, Byrhtferth's method in writing the *Vita* of his contemporary St Oswald is different and does incorporate conventional miracles. In writing about past saints, a different sort of hagiographical genre, a historicizing style, seems to have been employed. The work of these three authors does seem to represent a distinctive tradition within late Saxon hagiography which placed special value upon oral traditions.

The popular tales recounted in these lives were transmitted and committed to writing in the learned circles of Benedictine Reform: Dunstan is cited as the source for Edmund's story, and he, Æthelwold, and Oswald are credited with supporting the cult of Kenelm. Benedictine reform in England was marked by a desire to restore ancient Christianity and monasticism in England. Early saints' cults were revived and monasteries refounded in places where pre–Viking Age monasteries had existed.[50] For example, Æthelwold re-established the monastery at Ely along with the cults of St Æthelthryth and her virgin sisters. The revived cults could serve a number of purposes in legitimizing reform activities. The new foundations required endowments, and deliberate attempts were made to re-endow communities with their ancient property. The cults of the saints gave

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[49] A. Williams, '*Princeps Merciorum gentis*: The Family, Career and Connections of Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia, 956–83', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 10 (1982), 143–72 (pp. 145–46, 156, 159).

[50] D. Rollason, 'The Shrines of Saints in Later Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Anglo-Saxon Church*, ed. by L. A. S. Butler and R. K. Morris (London, 1986), pp. 32–43; A. Gransden, 'Traditionalism and Continuity during the Last Century of Anglo-Saxon Monasticism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40 (1989), 159–207; *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. by S. E. Kelly, 2 vols (Oxford, 2000–01), I (2000), pp. clxv–clxxiii.

legitimacy to the doings of the reformers and provided a ring of saintly protec-
tion around the newly acquired lands. The quantity of property involved could
be very sizable, and the policy did not meet with universal favour.[51] There was
a pressing need, therefore, to protect these reacquisitions. Local oral stories,
especially topographical lore, concerning the early saints may have been of par-
ticular value in associating the saint with his territory: Byrhtferth's story about
the foundation of Evesham may well have served this purpose.

While the Reformers saw themselves as restoring the ancient purity of reli-
gious life in England, their actions were nourished by contact with the continent,
particularly the monastery of St Benedict at Fleury. Frankish influence may also
have prompted interest in local saints and their lore. Thomas Head has noted the
importance of local cults to Fleury and has credited Abbo of Fleury with initiat-
ing a new interest in living sanctity at his own house and with a new hagiograph-
ical movement there.[52] How far did Abbo's influence stimulate an interest in
saints' cults in England? Was, for example, Byrhtferth's Life of the recently dead
Oswald in any way indebted to him? Could continental contact have prompted
the recording of popular oral tales? Not far from Fleury, at Micy, Abbo's con-
temporary, the monk Letaldus, composed a poem celebrating an episode of clear
folkloric origins, in which an Englishman from Rochester miraculously survived
being swallowed by a whale.[53] In his analysis of this poem, Ziolkowski notes
Letaldus's deft treatment of the story, preserving something of its character as an
oral narrative but retelling it with learned allusions and interpretation. Letaldus
also wrote hagiography, and his whale poem belongs with this, sharing an inter-
est in divine intervention and miraculous occurrences.

The popular stories contained in the English *vitae* may have derived from
monastic, clerical, or lay circles. Abbo's report of his sources suggests a courtly
transmission for Edmund's tale, an elite context shared by kings, warriors, and
learned church men, like St Dunstan. Stories in the *Vita Kenelmi*, on the other
hand, derive from local knowledge involving holy places marked by wells and
trees. The prominence of Clent in the *Vita* suggests that the stories predate the
foundation of Winchcombe and the removal of Kenelm's relics thence. Oral
stories of saintly exploits must have circulated within the intersections between

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[51] See, for example, S 786, a charter restoring property to the monastery at Pershore,
discussed in *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. by Kelly, I, pp. cvi–xi and clxv–clxxiii.

[52] T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 240–55.

[53] J. Ziolkowski, 'Folklore and Learned Lore in Letaldus's Whale Poem', *Viator*, 15 (1984),
107–18.

lay and religious, in monastic ambits created not only by pastoral ministry but also by the ties of property ownership and tenurial relations. Both the *Vita s. Ecgwini* and the *Vita s. Kenelmi* bear witness to the transport of saints' relics out of the church into the countryside on certain occasions, indicative of the close bonds between a monastery and its locale.[54]

John Blair has gathered together many popular stories about Anglo-Saxon saints, including a number that only survive in post-Conquest sources. He comments on the regional diffusion in west Mercia of the folk story of the bird and tree found in the life of St Kenelm and in that of St Æthelberht of Hereford (first recorded in the twelfth century). Cumulatively, as he argues, these stories suggest popular storytelling about local saints which intersected with the clerical culture of local minsters.[55] I myself have studied the narratives of a number of murdered royal saints in Anglo-Saxon England, arguing that these cults originated not as courtly or ecclesiastical promotions but with the laity and their local clergy.[56] Analysis of oral narratives opens a new window into early medieval religion which allows the historian to glimpse the practices of the non-elite and to obtain a more rounded picture of belief in the tenth and eleventh centuries than the aloof textual discourse of writers like Ælfric.

The presence of such popular stories in Anglo-Saxon England also alerts us to different ways of thinking about the past in the pre-Conquest period. The Ramsey/Worcester school of hagiography may have been particularly sympathetic to local stories. Byrhtferth's intellectual interests were marked by an interest in hagiography, *computus*, the calculation of time, and history.[57] He put together a historical miscellany which incorporated annals, histories, and hagiography including the story of two martyred Kentish princes, which may also have been transmitted orally.[58] His historical and hagiographical interests were clearly closely related. But others associated with the Benedictine Reform movement were less sympathetic to oral traditions. Ælfric, with typical tartness, distinguished between *fabulae*, Old English *saga*, on the one hand — 'þe menn secgað

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[54] Byrhtferth, *Vita sancti Ecgwini*, in *Original Lives of Anglo-Saxons*, ed. by Giles, p. 393; *VMSK*, chapters 28–30, pp. 84–87.

[55] Blair, 'Saint for Every Minster', pp. 476–86.

[56] Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity'.

[57] Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey'.

[58] P. Hunter Blair, 'Some Observations on the "Historia Regum" attributed to Symeon of Durham', in *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. by N. K. Chadwick and others (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 63–118; Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey'.

ongenan gecynde, þæt ðe næfre ne gewearð ne gewurðan ne mæg' — and *historia* on the other — 'þæt is gerecednyss. Mid þære man awrit and gerehð þa ðing and þa dæda, þe wæron gedone on ealdum dagum and us dyre wæron.'[59] Indeed, although he commented in his vernacular account of the Life of St Edmund on the existence of oral traditions presumably outside the *Vita* by Abbo, significantly he did not record these.[60] Attitudes to the past in early medieval England were pluralistic and not uniform.

Popular Stories and Attitudes to the Past

Both historians and literary scholars have concentrated upon the presence of heroic legend seen in poems like *Waldere* and *Beowulf*, but these look like complex and erudite stories by comparison with the folkloric material in *Vita sancti Kenelmi* with its simple plots and characterization. Roberta Frank has commented on the considerable knowledge required by poems like *Deor* and *Waldere* on the part of their audience. These poems refer allusively to many stories. Frank comments:

> The pleasure of recognition, of sharing in an erudite game, seems to have been as important to the Anglo-Saxons as to readers of Ovid and Milton. Germanic legend was something people had to know, like chess, claret or cricket, if they wanted to be thought cultured.[61]

Heroic legends may have been a sort of 'vernacular erudition', learned lore. The same may also be true of the oral legends preserved in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about the Anglo-Saxon invasions. Where did these stories originate? In popular storytelling, or were they specially cultivated by courts and nobility and as part of an elite culture?[62]

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[59] *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar: Text und Varianten*, ed. by J. Zupitza (Berlin, 1966), p. 296; 'which are said to be contrary to nature, that which never happened, nor can ever happen' and 'that is narrative, with which things and deeds, which were done in the old days and which are dear to us, are set down in writing and told'. Ælfric takes his definition of 'historia' from Isidore of Seville.

[60] *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. by Skeat, II, 332.

[61] R. Frank, 'Germanic Poetry in Old English Poetry', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. by M. Godden and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 88–106 (pp. 96–98).

[62] On these myths, see P. Sims-Williams, 'The Settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*', in his *Britain and Early Christian Europe* (Aldershot, 1995), II, 1–41; N. Brooks, 'The

Oral popular tales have been preserved in the historical as well as hagiographical record. Asser tells the story about Eadburh, the wicked and proud wife of King Offa who spurned Charlemagne as a husband and ended her days in ignominy.[63] Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* contains a number of oral tales.[64] Kings as well as saints could be a focus for storytelling; Alfred the Great's time as a refugee in the marshes clearly attracted stories. The *Vita sancti Neoti* and the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto* both preserve different versions of an encounter between the King and a saint in which Alfred's restoration and glorious rule is foretold along with other stories. Both texts are difficult to date: Lapidge suggests that the *Vita sancti Neoti* probably dates to the first half of the eleventh century, while the *Historia* has recently been assigned to the mid- to late eleventh century, but drawing upon older sources.[65] The latter is a northern source while the former originated in the south, possibly in Cornwall. There is no indication that authors of these texts knew one another's work.[66] The *Vita sancti Neoti* tells of three encounters between the holy man and the King. Alfred became a devotee of the saint but was rebuked by him for his evil behaviour. Neot prophesied to the King that he would lose his kingdom for his unrighteous rule but be restored if he mended his ways. This Alfred does, obeying the saint and sending alms to

Creation and Early Structure of the Kingdom of Kent' and 'The English Origin Myth', in his *Anglo-Saxon Myths* (London, 2000), pp. 33–60 (pp. 37–46) and pp. 79–89.

[63] On Asser, see P. Stafford, 'Succession and Inheritance: A Gendered Perspective on Alfred's Family History', in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. by T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 251–64 (pp. 261–64).

[64] Catalogued by C. E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (Edinburgh, 1939), pp. 72–77, discussed below pp. 218–19.

[65] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. XVII: *The Annals of St Neots with 'Vita prima sancti Neoti'*, ed. by D. Dumville and M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 110–42, with introduction, pp. lxxv–cxxiv. See C. Hart, 'The Date and Authorship of the First Life of St Neot', in *The Danelaw* (London, 1992), pp. 605–11; *'Historia de sancto Cuthberto': A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of his Patrimony*, ed. by T. Johnson South (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 25–36. For the older origins of parts of the *Historia*, see L. Simpson, 'The King Alfred/St Cuthbert Episode in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*: Its Significance for Mid-Tenth-Century English History', in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. by G. Bonner and others (Woodbridge, 1995), pp. 397–411; Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 555–56, n. 26.

[66] Some have argued for the indebtedness of the St Neot story to the *Historia*; see Simpson, 'King Alfred/St Cuthbert Episode', p. 410; D. Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 144–52 (p. 145). But see J. R. E. Bliese, 'St Cuthbert's and St Neot's Help in War: Visions and Exhortations', *Haskins Society Journal*, 7 (1995 [1997]), 39–62 (pp. 46–51).

Rome. After the saint's death, his prophecy is fulfilled: the Vikings invade, Alfred's army becomes dispersed or perishes, and the King retreats to the marshes. While there he takes shelter at Athelney and receives hospitality with a swineherd, where he meditates upon Neot's words and upon God's chastisement of those He loves. It is here that the episode of Alfred's famous culinary inadvertence takes place, when he earns the rebuke of the swineherd's wife for his failure to turn the cakes baking in the ashes. Alfred subsequently is rejoined by his troops and gradually they become successful against the Vikings. One night, Neot appears for the third and last time to Alfred in a dream, promising victory in battle if Alfred rules in an exemplary Christian fashion.[67] Neot's words come true: Alfred's whole army gathers, defeating the Vikings and restoring Alfred who becomes a great Christian ruler.

In the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*, it is Cuthbert who has the starring role as prophet. Alfred and his household are ensconced in the marshes when a stranger appears while Alfred's followers are out fishing. Despite their meagre resources, Alfred insists on giving food and drink to the visitor who then disappears. The fishers return with a miraculously large haul. That night, Cuthbert appears to Alfred, revealing his identity as the mysterious guest, and he foretells Alfred's victory, his future rule over all Albion, and the successful transmission of this kingdom to his sons, promising his patronage to Alfred and his sons in return for fidelity to him. He instructs Alfred to arise at dawn, sound his horn three times, and by the ninth hour, Alfred will have five hundred men. Then in seven days Alfred's whole army will gather at *Assandune* and win the battle. The saint's words come true and Alfred's army is restored and his kingdom regained. When Alfred's first five hundred followers assembled, Alfred admonished them to shun evil behaviour and be virtuous, faithful to Cuthbert's teaching.[68] Alfred's subsequent career is a glorious one, king over all England, righteous in all his ways.

These two stories, or sets of stories, are clearly related. The St Neot version is not entirely flattering to Alfred since it describes his rule as tyrannical; an important part of the story concerns his change of heart and the transformation of his ways. This is not found in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto* where Alfred's admonition to his five hundred followers to eschew evil and follow good — somewhat out of place in this version — looks like a remnant of this. It is therefore possible that the *Vita sancti Neoti prima* embodies an earlier and fuller version of the story. Both versions contain further accretions and embellishments

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[67] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, vol. XVII, ed. by Dumville and Lapidge, p. 128.

[68] *'Historia de sancto Cuthberto'*, ed. by South, pp. 54–59.

of oral stories — in the *Historia*, the miraculous draught of fish and Alfred's three horn calls and their results. The story of Alfred and the cakes also belongs to oral tradition: Joaquín Martínez Pizarro has revealed an analogue in Procopius's *De bello Vandalico* account of Gelimer's flight from the Byzantine army.[69]

The core story of the saintly prophecy of victory can be found in eighth-century Northumbrian sources, the *Vita Gregorii magni* and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* when it is told concerning Edwin's exile at Rædwald's court. According to Bede, Edwin discovers that he is about to be betrayed by his host but he refuses to flee and stays at court, brooding on his lot when a stranger appears. The mysterious visitor asks him three questions: what would Edwin give to be freed from his enemies, to find his enemies destroyed and become a great ruler, and to learn of a better path to salvation. When Edwin agrees that he would follow the teaching of one who could promise this, the stranger puts his right hand on the King's head. In due course, Rædwald changes his mind and helps Edwin by fighting and defeating his enemy, Æthelfrith, at the Battle of the River Idle. After Edwin is restored to his kingdom, Paulinus equipped with spiritual knowledge of Edwin's vision, repeats the gesture of placing his right hand on the King's head and presses him to fulfil his part of the bargain.[70] The *Vita Gregorii magni* version is much shorter and makes Paulinus the mysterious stranger. It is prefaced by a long statement about the oral origins of this story which curiously disclaims its veracity.[71] Bede's telling is quite close to the content of that of the *Vita sancti Neoti* — both kings brood on their fate in exile, the prophecy of future greatness is linked to some sort of transformation of character and to the mustering of an army to fight the enemy. A more distant parallel is found in the Saga of Saint Olaf in Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*; the existence of another version of this story in medieval Iceland confirms its oral and popular status and suggests wider circulation, presumably independent of the written record. The story concerns St Olaf's exile in Russia: Olaf suffers a sleepless night contemplating his plans; when he finally drops off he has a vision of a man who tells him to return to his God-given kingdom and not to consider abandoning Sweden.

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[69] J. Martínez Pizarro, 'Kings in Adversity: A Note on Alfred and the Cakes', *Neophilologus*, 80 (1996), 319–26 (pp. 322–24).

[70] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. and trans. by B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969) (hereafter Bede, *HE*), Bk II, ch. 12, pp. 174–83. Simpson, 'King Alfred/St Cuthbert Episode', p. 409, sees Bede's story as the textual source of the Alfred story, but see again Bliese, 'St Cuthbert's and St Neot's Help', pp. 61–62.

[71] *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. by B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1968), chapter 16, pp. 98–101.

Olaf must return to fight for his own kingdom. Olaf obeys, and on his return, his men rejoin him determined to fight. The message here is a trifle ambivalent since the campaign results in Olaf's death at Stiklestad and his future career as a national saint.[72]

The presence and use of this story type in Anglo-Saxon England illustrate the close intertwining of oral stories, written preservation, and learned reworking. The hagiographer of the *Vita sancti Neoti prima* writes a complex hermeneutic Latin, replete with obscure Graecisms, and draws upon the Latin poets and upon the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to provide a historical framework. It is a learned work. Pizarro's study of the story of the burnt cakes is exemplary in examination of oral and textual, showing how it combines Boethian views of the reversals of fortune with a story of ancient origins.[73] The author of the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto* adds a chapter setting out the biblical parallels to Cuthbert's prophecy and alludes to Bede's story of Edwin. But his report of this story goes beyond Bede's, identifying the stranger with St Peter and equipping him with a golden cross and crown, perhaps an embellishment of the Bedan story through oral retelling. Its story of Alfred's hospitality must echo the miracle in the prose *vitae* of Cuthbert where the saint himself gives provisions to an angelic visitor.[74] These echoes are indicative of the continuous interaction between written textual tales and stories of a folkloric type. Stories about saints derived from hagiography must have entered in popular traditions. Alfred's prophecy may be a reworking of Bede's account of Edwin based on textual sources, but it seems more likely, given the parallels adduced above, that this is an ancient story type told about the King because of his period of refuge. Since its possible original form was not flattering to the King, it is unlikely to have originated at the West Saxon court as has been suggested; rather it was a tale in circulation about the King adapted possibly in royal circles to boost the claims of his dynasty. Scholars who see this and similar stories in terms of either textual transmission or *de novo* composition miss an important dimension in our understanding of Anglo-Saxon culture.[75]

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[72] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. by L. M. Hollander (Austin, 1995), chapter 188, pp. 483–84.

[73] Pizarro, 'Kings in Adversity', pp. 319–26.

[74] *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. by B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), anonymous *vita*, II, 2, pp. 76–79, Bedan *vita*, chapter 7, pp. 174–79.

[75] For the courtly origins of this story, see *'Historia de sancto Cuthberto'*, ed. by South, p. 94, and for its West Saxon propagandistic elements, see Simpson, 'King Alfred/St Cuthbert

Readers and auditors of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and the other texts discussed here would have been aware of their different registers. The reoccurrence of triads in these stories belongs to the patterns of traditional tales but also has Trinitarian resonances.[76] There is no dichotomy between learned, written, and oral, but rather these modes flowed together. A modern awareness of the presence of the oral in the written contributes to our understanding of how the authors and audience received the texts in which traditional tales are conveyed. John McNamara has shown how Bede was both a participant in a lively oral storytelling culture and transformed the meaning of these stories for his own ends.[77] The *Historia ecclesiastica* contains a number of traditional stories which Bede uses skilfully in the emplotting of his narrative.[78] The story of Cædmon and the angelic inspiration of his poetry can be closely parallelled in texts from elsewhere including the Koran.[79] Bede's account of the murder of King Oswine belongs with other tales of royal murders where the king is treacherously killed by an underling.[80] Bede's contemporary readers would have recognized many of his stories and their patterns; their incorporation into the *Historia ecclesiastica*, itself modelled on earlier Christian histories, must have endorsed and enhanced their value.

Why did Bede seamlessly work the story of Edwin at the court of Rædwald into his *Historia* where the anonymous author of *Vita Gregorii* chose to highlight

Episode', pp. 397–411. Lapidge points to oral sources; see *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, vol. XVII, ed. by Dumville and Lapidge, pp. civ–cv. See also H. Munro Chadwick's comments, *The Study of Anglo-Saxon*, 2nd edn by N. K. Chadwick (Cambridge, 1955), p. 7.

[76] In the *Vita Ecgwini*, the pig's three disappearances and litters; Edwin's three questions; Alfred's three blows on his horn. For folkloric triads, see Axel Olrik, 'Epic Laws of Folk Narrative', in *The Study of Folklore*, ed. by Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1965), pp. 129–41 (pp. 132–33).

[77] McNamara, 'Bede's Role'.

[78] Some of these are listed by Wright, *Cultivation of Saga*, pp. 72–73. See my 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 82–83, for a discussion of the murder of Oswine. See D. P. Kirby, 'Bede's Native Sources for the *Historia ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 48 (1966), 341–71, for Bede's contemporary informants.

[79] Bede, *HE*, Bk IV, 24, pp. 414–21. G. A. Lester, 'The Cædmon Story and its Analogues', *Neophilologus*, 58 (1974), 225–37; L. Morland, 'Cædmon and the Germanic Tradition', in *De Gustibus: Essays for Alain Renoir*, ed. by John Miles Foley and others (New York, 1992), pp. 324–58. K. von See, 'Cædmon und Muhammed', *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur*, 112 (1983), 225–33.

[80] Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', pp. 66–67, 77, 82–83.

its oral status?[81] How do different authors incorporate and manipulate such stories? Bede retells three stories about Edwin of oral popular origin — the assassination attempt, the prophecy, and Coifi's debate — and meshes these into royal and episcopal chronology, interleaving them with papal letters so that they gain equal authority.[82] They act as triggers for Edwin's conversion and as explanations for his lengthy delay in adopting the true faith.

Bede's artful and rationalizing narrative can be something of a trap for modern historians seeking to provide a factual reconstruction of early history, located within a secure chronological framework.[83] Our textual knowledge of the Northumbrian past is based upon a mixture of folk tale, regnal lists, and a handful of documents.[84] The various origins of this evidence require careful handling: folkloric stories defy chronological precision. The existence of a story may tell us more about Anglo-Saxon culture than its supposed reality. The fact that the monastery at Whitby developed a tradition concerning its role in initiating vernacular Christian poetry and its divine legitimation is more significant than the possible factual existence of Cædmon the poet.[85]

Popular stories have a vital contribution to make to the study of orality in the early Middle Ages. Historians have tended to focus upon questions of orality and literacy in governmental administration and legal dealings while amongst literary scholars, the most pressing questions have concerned the composition of Old English poetry and the nature of heroic verse.[86] Discussions of orality have

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[81] The inclusion of so many oral stories in the *Vita Gregorii* may be a pointer to its female authorship. See J. Nelson ('Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages', in her collected papers, *The Frankish World 750–900* (London, 1996), pp. 183–97) for the suggestion that the inclusion of oral material may be a hallmark of female authorship. See also for folklore in the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 146–53.

[82] Bede, *HE*, Bk II, chs 9–14, pp. 162–89.

[83] On Bede's narrativizing, see my 'Memory and Narrative in the Cult of the Early Anglo-Saxon Saints', in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Y. Hen and M. Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 29–66 (pp. 46–50).

[84] See also D. Dumville, 'Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists', in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. by P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood (Leeds, 1977), pp. 72–104. See also Stafford, 'Succession and Inheritance', pp. 261–62.

[85] See the discussion of J. D. Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 132–34, arguing for the story as a 'myth of the coming of culture'.

[86] See, for example, *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. by R. McKitterick (Cambridge, 1990); M. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd edn

looked to anthropological and African parallels for inspiration while neglecting the more mundane oral culture of folklore. Yet, stories of murdered innocents, wicked stepsisters, and supernaturally gifted animals must have been commonplace and regularly told. The evidence for such stories in the tenth and eleventh centuries points to a lively culture of storytelling, not confined to verse although perhaps closely aligned to it.

Tales, Talk, and Political Commentary

These stories may have shaped the interpretation of the present as well as the recollection of the past. They also remind us of the important role of storytelling and gossip in society and politics. The present may have been explained in terms of the same narrative patterns as popular stories — the wicked stepsister or step-mother, the faithless counsellor. Did the stories of Ælfthryth's role in the assassination of her stepson, Edward the Martyr, originate earlier in contemporary rumours about his death?[87] Chris Wickham has recently reminded us of the power of gossip in both medieval and modern society to shape reputations and undermine unpopular regimes.[88] The reconstruction of contemporary attitudes and talk from the impoverished records of the tenth and eleventh centuries is perilous. Nevertheless, some hints of the iceberg of gossip may remain and a few can be traced in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.[89] In the annal for 1006, the Chronicler incorporates spoken lore about the Viking invasions: reporting how

(Oxford, 1993). K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990), J. Opland, *Anglo-Saxon Oral Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (New Haven, 1980). See also M. Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West: Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (Dublin, 1994); Richter, *The Oral Tradition in the Early Middle Ages*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, 71 (Turnhout, 1994). For a historiographical overview, see R. Frank, 'The Search for the Anglo-Saxon Oral Poet', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 75 (1993), 11–36.

[87] Cubitt, 'Sites and Sanctity', p. 82; S. Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready', in *Ethelred the Unready*, ed. D. Hill, BAR British Series, 59 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 227–53.

[88] C. Wickham, 'Gossip and Resistance among the Medieval Peasantry', *Past and Present*, 160 (1998), 3–24 (pp. 18–20). And see also *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe*, ed. by T. Fenster and D. Lord Smail (Ithaca, NY, 2003); H.-J. Neubauer, *The Rumour: A Cultural History* (London, 1999).

[89] For the echo of a proverb in the Æthelredian Chronicle, see T. Hill, '"When a Leader is Brave…": An Old English Proverb and its Vernacular Context', *Anglia*, 119 (2001), 232–36.

the Vikings deliberately take up occupation of Cuckhamsley Barrow, the Chronicler states that the Vikings 'þær onbidedon beotra gylpa. forþon oft man cwæð. Gif hi Cwicchelmes hlæwe ge sohton. þet hi næfre to sæ gan ne sceoldon.'[90] Such humiliation must have prompted bitter murmurings.

    The epithet *unræd* ('no counsel', or perhaps 'ill-advised') of Æthelred II is not recorded until the late twelfth century and then in a somewhat garbled form. Keynes has argued for its probable origin after the Conquest, in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[91] However, there is good contemporary evidence for an awareness of the appropriateness (or otherwise) of personal names: two charters dated to 995 contain comments on the meaning of names, including an adverse comment on that of a criminal, Æthelsige ('noble victory').[92] Mary Clayton, discussing the criticisms of misgovernance and poor judgement made by Æthelred's contemporary, the homilist Ælfric, notes the importance of *ræd* in some of these.[93] Clayton argues that in one Old English text, Ælfric may actually be attacking the King's failure to appoint good generals while seeming to defend Æthelred's practice of delegating the leadership of his armies. Ælfric comments 'we sceolon secan æt Gode sylfum urne ræd mid unrædum mode'.[94] Similarly, the remarks in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'Ealle þas ungesælða us ge lumpon þurh unrædes', are surely an allusion to the King's nickname.[95] The annalist was

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[90] *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. by Plummer and Earle, *s.a.* 1006, I (1892), 136–37; translation from *EHD*, p. 240: '[The Vikings] waited there for what had been proudly threatened, for it had often been said that if they went to Cuckhamsley, they would never get to the sea.'

[91] Keynes, 'Declining Reputation', pp. 240–41.

[92] 'cui nomen Æðelsige parentes indidere, licet foedo nomen dehonestauerit flagitio': S 886, p. 490; *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. by Kelly, II, 490 with discussion, p. 493. And see also S 885, AD 995. Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978–1016: A Study in their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 102.

[93] M. Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. by J. Roberts and J. Nelson (London, 2000), pp. 65–88.

[94] Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', pp. 82–85, and John C. Pope, *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, 2 vols, EETS 259–60 (Oxford, 1967–68), II (1968), 731 (quoted by Clayton, her translation: 'we must seek our counsel from God himself with a resolute spirit'). Clayton herself suggests that the nickname may have arisen early in the reign: 'Ælfric and Æthelred', p. 69, n. 19.

[95] *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. by Plummer and Earle, *s.a.* 1011, I, 141; translation from *EHD*, p. 244: 'all those disasters befell us through bad policy'. See also A. Sheppard,

writing retrospectively, after the conquest of England and Æthelred's flight and death, but his views may reflect wider debate and discussion of the country's leadership.[96] It may be significant that according to the annal for 1014, when Æthelred was received back as king, he agreed to forgive 'ælc þæra þinga [. . .] þe hi[m] ge don oððe ge cweðen wære'.[97] The disintegration of Æthelred's rule in the early eleventh century may have been hastened by gossip, recrimination, and bitter irony among his leading men and the wider people.

Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History

Why have popular stories been relegated to the margins of Anglo-Saxon history, ignored, or viewed simply as a mine for historical fact? One reason lies in the myths and narratives of Anglo-Saxon scholarship itself, in the origins of the study of the early Middle Ages in England. Christopher Hill has shown how in the historical writing of the early modern period the myth of the 'Norman yoke' came to act as a vehicle for political debates concerning the freedom of the English people and the nature of their relationship to royal authority. The Saxon period was seen as the origin of English democratic freedom and, indeed, of Parliament itself.[98] By the nineteenth century, the immediate political impact of such ideas had waned but their inheritance was an emphasis on constitutional history and upon the problems of continuity in legal traditions, freedoms, and rights between the pre-Conquest and the present day.[99] Even historians as self-

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'Noble Counsel, No Counsel: Advising Ethelred the Unready', in *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J. E. Cross*, ed. by T. N. Hall (Morgantown, WV, 2002), pp. 393–422.

[96] See also E. Tyler, 'Poetics and the Past: Making History with Old English Poetry', in this volume.

[97] *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. by Plummer and Earle, *s. a.* 1014, I, 145; translation from *EHD*, p. 247: 'all the things that had been said and done against him'.

[98] C. Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (London, 1958), pp. 50–152.

[99] See S. Kliger, *The Goths in England: A Study in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1952); R. J. Smith, *The Gothic Bequest* (Cambridge, 1987); J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 97–228. P. R. H. Slee, *Learning and a Liberal Education: The Study of Modern History in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester 1800–1914* (Manchester, 1986). C. A. Simmons, *Reversing the Conquest* (New Brunswick, 1990)

consciously removed from earlier political uses of ideas of Anglo-Saxon freedoms as Stubbs and Maitland were still working in relation to a dialectic established over a century earlier.[100]

Stubbs's *Constitutional History* is nowadays little cited by Anglo-Saxon scholars, but Sir Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* remains the starting point for much historical discussion.[101] Stenton was educated at Oxford in the years 1899–1902 and studied under Reginald Lane Poole, W. H. Stevenson, A. S. Napier, Sir Paul Vinogradoff, and Sir Charles Firth (later Regius Professor of Modern History).[102] His education coincided with the first, controversial, moves towards the provision of a professional training for historians at Oxford by Sir Charles Firth, with which Stenton was greatly in sympathy.[103] Firth called for 'the enterprising accumulation and critical evaluation of sources, with the considered results of his investigations presented in a well-organized and appealing form'.[104] Stenton himself attended lectures on diplomatic by Reginald Lane Poole and on Anglo-Saxon by Napier, and studied with W. H. Stevenson, equipping himself as an undergraduate with a first-rate research training. His

[100] For Stubbs, see Burrow, *Liberal Descent*, pp. 151, and for Stubbs and Maitland, see J. W. Burrow, '"The Village Community" and the Uses of History in Late Nineteenth-Century England', in *Historical Perspectives: Studies in English Thought and Society in Honour of J. H. Plumb*, ed. by N. McKendrick (London, 1974), pp. 255–84. R. Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History and the Making of an English Elite, 1870–1930* (Stanford, CA, 1994). J. Vernon, 'Narrating the Constitution: The Discourse of "the Real" and the Fantasies of Nineteenth-Century Constitutional History', in *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by J. Vernon (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 204–29.

[101] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* 3rd edn (Oxford, 1971). For evaluations of *Anglo-Saxon England*, see *Stenton's 'Anglo-Saxon England' Fifty Years On: Papers given at a Colloquium held at Reading 11–12 November 1993*, ed. by D. Matthew (Reading, 1994). See also J. Campbell, 'Stubbs and the English State', in his *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), pp. 247–68.

[102] D. M. Stenton, 'Frank Merry Stenton, 1880–1967', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 54 (1968), 315–423; partially repr. in *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 2002), pp. 247–83; D. Whitelock, 'Frank Merry Stenton', *EHR*, 330 (1969), 1–11; J. C. Holt, 'Stenton, Sir Frank Merry (1880–1967)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and B. Harrison, 61 vols (Oxford, 2004), LII, 405–07 (hereafter *DNB*).

[103] On Firth, see Ivan Roots, 'Firth, Sir Charles (1857–1936)', *DNB*, XIX, 640–43; Soffer, *Discipline and Power*, pp. 104–12; Burrow, *Liberal Descent*, p. 98. For Stenton's support of Firth's initiatives, see Whitelock, 'Frank Merry Stenton', p. 1.

[104] Roots, 'Firth, Sir Charles (1857–1936)'.

scholarship displays the fruits of these studies and embodies exactly the qualities required by Firth.[105]

Stenton's undergraduate days therefore coincided with a new emphasis on the professionalization of history and the production of more detached and 'scientific' research. But his choice of research topics was inevitably shaped by the questions which had dominated the study of Anglo-Saxon history.[106] He had attended the seminar of Sir Paul Vinogradoff whose publications on manorial structures and villeinage contributed to the English debate over the nature of the village community.[107] Stenton's work on Danelaw institutions was partly prompted by an invitation from Vinogradoff to lecture on this topic. His work on feudalism, the peasantry, land tenure, and the Conquest belong to the long tradition of Anglo-Saxon scholarship. The social history of England before the Conquest has been dominated by legal evidence and issues.[108] The impact of other approaches, such as the Annales school, has been muted: the social history of Anglo-Saxon England has been shaped by Maitland rather than Bloch.[109] One consequence of this is that the history of the mentalities has not gained significant ground: where Le Goff and Gurevich highlighted medieval folklore, in Anglo-Saxon scholarship it has generally been ignored.

Stenton's influence upon Anglo-Saxon studies was immense: he was President of the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association, a member of the council of the British Academy. He played an important role in the founding of the English Place-Name Society, was its president for over twenty years, and was instrumental in establishing the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles*. While he did not have a large school of research students, he was a generous scholar, willing

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[105] Stenton, 'Frank Merry Stenton', pp. 337–50. His early researches included work in the Victoria County Histories: Stenton, 'Frank Merry Stenton', pp. 352–61.

[106] See F. M. Stenton, 'Early English History, 1895–1920', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th series, 28 (1946), 1–19 (pp. 1–13).

[107] See P. Stein, 'Vinogradoff, Sir Paul Gavrilovitch (1854–1925)', *DNB*, LVI, 553–55. Burrow, '"Village Community"', pp. 256–60.

[108] See Chris Wickham, 'Problems of Comparing Rural Societies in Early Medieval Western Europe', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 2 (1992), 221–46. On the hostility of legal historians to oral tradition, see D. R. Woolf, 'The "Common Voice": History, Folklore and Oral Tradition in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 120 (1988), 26–52.

[109] See J. Smith, 'Introduction: Regarding Medievalists: Contexts and Approaches', in *Companion to Historiography*, ed. by M. Bentley (London, 1992), pp. 105–16 (pp. 108–09).

to advise others.[110] Foremost amongst those who benefited from his guidance was Dorothy Whitelock, and together they have dominated the development of the field.[111] Whitelock had read English at Cambridge, studying philology and Old English.[112] Although she taught Old English for much of her working life, her interests lay more with historical research.[113] Whitelock's inaugural lecture as Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at the University of Cambridge in 1958, 'Changing Currents in Anglo-Saxon Studies', is at pains to emphasize the sophistication of Anglo-Saxon culture and its significance within medieval history, rescuing it from charges of primitivism.[114] Stenton's presidential address to the Royal Historical Society in 1945 also emphasized how recent the foundations of Anglo-Saxon scholarship were. Many texts were unedited or poorly so, and much remained to be done.[115] These two great scholars were confronted by the need for a sound foundation for the study of pre-Conquest history which lacked both reliable editions of many texts and a sure chronology, twin problems which dominated their research careers.[116] While Whitelock's edition of Anglo-Saxon wills was both a pioneering work and a model of its type, Stenton published the first discussion of the principles of Anglo-Saxon diplomatic and in his monograph *Anglo-Saxon England* composed a narrative of English history based on authentic contemporary sources. Their rigorous *Quellenkritik* was fundamental for the development of many areas of Anglo-Saxon studies, literary, linguistic, and historical. In this way, Anglo-Saxon studies were brought into line with continental textual scholarship, such as the work of Delehaye on hagiography and the Monumenta Germaniae Historica.[117]

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[110] His most distinguished student was, of course, his wife, Lady Doris Stenton. Whitelock, 'Frank Merry Stenton', p. 10–11, and see D. Whitelock, 'Florence Elizabeth Harmer', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 54 (1968), 301–14; repr. in *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Lapidge, pp. 369–80 (p. 373).

[111] On Whitelock's close friendship, see S. Keynes, 'Whitelock, Dorothy (1901–1982)', *DNB*, LVIII, 692–94; Whitelock's own tribute to Stenton in her obituary of him, 'Frank Merry Stenton'.

[112] H. Loyn, 'Dorothy Whitelock, 1901–1982', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 70 (1984), 543–54; repr. in *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Lapidge, pp. 426–37.

[113] See Loyn, 'Dorothy Whitelock', pp. 432, 435.

[114] Dorothy Whitelock, *Changing Currents in Anglo-Saxon Studies* (Cambridge, 1958).

[115] Stenton, 'Early English History', pp. 12–13.

[116] On these problems, see Stenton, 'Early English History', pp. 12–14.

[117] David Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises and Problems in Monastic History* (London, 1963), pp. 1–32, 63–97.

Neither Stenton nor Whitelock had much interest in popular narratives and oral literature. Stenton's interests centred upon legal texts, place-names, and numismatics. Lady Stenton wrote 'Frank was not a romantic and always preferred evidence which really was contemporary to that which was written down several hundred years afterwards. Hence it was the gritty food of language and early law for which he yearned rather than for the heady tales of Vikings which were for him entertainment rather than intellectual sustenance.'[118] Whitelock, too, laid the emphasis upon reliable facts and preferred tracing the Christian and patristic influences on Old English texts to scrutiny of their Germanic background.[119] In this, both were rejecting a more 'romantic' and old fashioned approach which had elevated epic poetry as a means to understand earlier and more 'primitive' times and as a source of national identity.[120] This tradition of Anglo-Saxon studies was embodied in the work of Hector Munro Chadwick, Whitelock's own teacher and her predecessor as Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge.[121]

Chadwick's interests bridged philological, literary, and historical studies. He too appreciated the pressing need for reliable editions of Anglo-Saxon documents: the ground-breaking work of Whitelock and Florence Harmer, for example, was carried out at his suggestion.[122] His *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions* is a penetrating and careful analysis of the historical evidence for social hierarchy, office, and coinage in early medieval England. But, with a training in Classics and with an expertise in Scandinavian languages, Chadwick's main interests were in comparative literature and its implications for the study of Old English. This, together with anthropology, provided a context in which folkloric material could be studied.[123] His *Heroic Age* surveys Scandinavian, Germanic, and Classical

[118] Stenton, 'Frank Merry Stenton', p. 253.

[119] Loyn, 'Dorothy Whitelock', p. 431; Whitelock, *Changing Currents*, p. 9.

[120] Burrow, *Liberal Descent*, pp. 114–19, and 'The Uses of Philology in Victorian England', in *Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain: Essays in Honour of George Kitson Clark*, ed. by R. Robson (London, 1967), pp. 180–204.

[121] See Loyn, 'Dorothy Whitelock', p. 428; M. Lapidge, 'Introduction', in *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Lapidge, pp. 1–25 (p. 23); Keynes, 'Whitelock, Dorothy (1901–1982)'.

[122] Keynes, 'Whitelock, Dorothy (1901–1982)'; Whitelock, 'Florence Elizabeth Harmer', p. 370. Keynes observes that Chadwick initiated the work of F. L. Attenborough and A. J. Robertson on Anglo-Saxon laws, too.

[123] J. M. De Navarro, 'Hector Munro Chadwick', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 33 (1947), 307–30; repr. in *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Lapidge, pp. 195–218.

literatures, highlighting the similarities between the oral composition of poetry in *Beowulf*, Homer, and Serbian poetry.[124] His range in the massive, three-volume, *The Growth of Literature*, written in collaboration with his wife, Nora, encompassed Celtic, East European, and African literature.

Oral literature and folk stories were greatly of interest to him. Chadwick devoted a chapter 'Supernatural Elements in the Heroic Stories' in *The Heroic Age* to arguing that some motifs and tales shared between Old English and Scandinavian poetry and prose were the result of the circulation of folk tales, a view which he repeated in *The Growth of Literature*.[125] The brilliant Celtic philologist, Kenneth Jackson, whose Gregynog lectures mentioned at the beginning of this essay discuss the place of the popular story in Welsh literature, was a pupil of Chadwick's.[126] However, Chadwick's emphasis on comparative literature has been less influential on the shape of Anglo-Saxon studies in Britain than his insistence on the multi- or interdisciplinary approach to the subject.[127]

The most exhaustive study of the oral and popular elements in Anglo-Saxon texts was produced by a pupil of Chadwick's, C. E. Wright, in a thesis published as a book in 1939, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England*. In his preface, Wright acknowledges Chadwick's influence and relates the project to his supervisor's work.[128] Wright collected together evidence for prose 'sagas' in Anglo-Saxon England, from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* to post-Conquest historians like William of Malmesbury or Gaimar (writing in French), and he argued that Anglo-Saxon England possessed its own tradition of prose storytelling akin to that of the Icelandic sagas. Wright therefore primarily interpreted these tales as literature and sought to set them in a comparative framework. One of the merits

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[124] H. Munro Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912). On Chadwick, see Lapidge, 'Introduction', pp. 5–6, 12, 21–23.

[125] Chadwick, *Heroic Age*, pp. 110–30, and see also pp. 258–62, 264–67; H. Munro Chadwick and N. Kershaw Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1932–40), I (1932), 430–44, III (1940), 763–64, 774; Chadwick, *Study of Anglo-Saxon*, pp. 7, 9, on Bede and oral narratives.

[126] J. E. Caerwyn Williams, 'Kenneth Hurlstone Jackson, 1909–1991', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 80 (1991), 313–32; repr. in *Interpreters of Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by Lapidge, pp. 503–51 (pp. 505–09).

[127] On seminal work of Chadwick on Anglo-Saxon origin myths, see Brooks, 'English Origin Myth', p. 80; Sims-Williams, 'Settlement of England', pp. 1–5.

[128] Wright, *Cultivation of Saga*, p. viii; and the comments in Chadwick's *Study of Anglo-Saxon*.

of Wright's study was to argue for continuity between pre-Conquest and post-Conquest storytelling, and thus bridge the divide which exists in historiography between developments before and after 1066 and in literary studies between Old and Middle English. He was not alone in collecting such stories; studies by Wilson and by Loomis also gathered together these stories for their own sake, rather than as sources of historical nuggets.[129] However, even as literature, they did not really gain a foothold for a number of reasons. Historical research, led by Stenton, had begun to branch off from the multidisciplinary approach advocated by Chadwick; the study of both history and literature was becoming a specialized professional field, dividing fact and fiction, Latin and Old English between them (leaving Anglo-Norman in no-man's land!). At this time, a new trajectory developed for literary studies, rejecting philology and a preoccupation with the ancient Germanic past. Instead, the new fashion concentrated upon the Christian background of medieval literature and claimed patristic literature as the key to understanding Old English texts.[130] Dorothy Whitelock, as always in the forefront of her field, wrote in her inaugural lecture:

> An important development is the shift away from attempts to find pagan and heroic poetry behind some extant poems to an appreciative study of these in their own right. The heroic element was given its full mead of appreciation by W. P. Ker and Professor Chadwick, whose *Heroic Age* remains the classic work on the subject. It is now the turn of the religious element.[131]

An interest in comparative Germanic literature and with oral sagas began to look outmoded and fell out of favour so that there appears to have been little interest in following up Wright's collection of 'prose sagas'.

Wright's corpus is a fascinating mine of information, an extraordinary body of legendary material about Anglo-Saxon figures, from King Offa of Mercia to Earl Godwine and Archbishop Dunstan. But, apart from his central and really quite simple thesis, Wright does not organize his material analytically, simply dividing his material chronologically. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Wright's work has been neglected since the significance of the material is

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[129] R. M. Wilson, *The Lost Literature of Medieval England* (London, 1952); C. Grant Loomis, *White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend* (Cambridge, MA, 1948).

[130] A. J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English and Teaching the Tradition* (Brunswick, 1990), p. 79.

[131] Whitelock, *Changing Currents*, p. 9.

unclear. There is a basic problem of how such evidently fictional material can be used by the historian or by the literary scholar.

Wright failed to ask more probing questions of his material partly because he lacked the methodological tools with which to analyse it. Folklore studies, for example, have been riven by dispute over the status and utility of folklore stories preserved in written sources and have been dominated by scholars who have shunned written evidence as tainted and argue for the priority of oral versions of stories.[132] Folklore studies in England have had a low academic status.[133] More recent research enables us now to appreciate and use popular stories from the Anglo-Saxon period. The publications of Vladimir Propp, for example, can provide a model for the analysis of structural elements in them.[134] The work of Jan Vansina on oral literature is now routinely used by early medieval historians, and oral history has become an established area of research for the historian with sophisticated work on its methodology by scholars like Alessandro Portelli and Liusa Passerini.[135] Our understanding of memory has improved through modern appreciations of work by Frederic Bartlett and Maurice Halbwachs.[136] White-lock's trusting attitude to the story told by Edmund's armour-bearer and the reliability of Dunstan's transmission of the story appears naive now because of our exposure to studies of orality and memory. McNamara's recent study, for example, utilizes modern folklore scholarship to suggest new approaches to Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, emphasizing the social milieu of oral storytelling.[137]

Narrative, the way in which we tell stories and the stories we tell, plays a vital part in making sense of human experience. In seeking to highlight the place of oral narratives in the early Middle Ages, I have been prompted to trace the growth of the modern discipline. These stories are intertwined. The norms and

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[132] Ziolkowski, 'Fairy Tale', pp. 549–55.

[133] *Dictionary of English Folklore*, ed. by Simpson and Roud, pp. 128–29.

[134] V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd edn (Austin, TX, 1968).

[135] For example, J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (London, 1985); A. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY, 1991); L. Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge, 1987).

[136] F. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge, 1932); M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago, 1992).

[137] See above, note 5. I should like to thank the following for their help with this essay: Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow, Martha Bayliss, John Blair, Gabriella Corona, Geoff Cubitt, Paul Fouracre, Matt Townend, Elizabeth Tyler, Chris Wickham, and Jan Ziolkowski.

tropes of modern Anglo-Saxon historical study have been largely preoccupied with establishing a reliable chronology and framework of events for the period before 1066 and with the publication of painstaking editions. Political history and the study of institutions have tended to take first place. The achievements of scholars in these fields have laid sure foundations for the future of the subject. But, at the same time, important aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture have been marginalized as irrelevant to these master narratives. Popular stories, with their cast of heroes, villains, and villainesses, wonder-pigs and cows, all too familiar to us from childhood storybooks, seem to have little to contribute to understanding high politics or tenurial patterns. But oral stories were a significant part of the cultural world of early England and we neglect them at our peril. It is important to recognize that our modern historical narratives of Anglo-Saxon history are partly based upon the foundations of oral stories. The fact that scholars such as Bede, Abbo of Fleury, or Byrhtferth of Ramsey valued and reshaped bookish knowledge and local legend challenges the customary scholarly divisions between oral and literate, learned and popular, fact and fiction. The limits of *Quellenkritik*, a fundamental disciplinary tool, are exposed in the inadequacy of sifting historical fact from the luxuriant growth of legend. The artificiality of modern disciplinary boundaries is highlighted: the division between Latin and Old English literatures, between pre- and post-Conquest England and between Anglo-Saxon England and its neighbours in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, and Scandinavia.

What emerges is a richer picture of Anglo-Saxon England. Our image of religious devotion and lay piety becomes more varied and nuanced, the dominance of patristic Latin learning set in a broader context. A new element is added to our understanding of Anglo-Saxon attitudes to the past, and to their interpretation of the present. This evidence of popular prose storytelling adds a further dimension to the comprehension of orality and provides a wider picture within which to place heroic poetry and Germanic legend. It forms part of the history of mentalities which in turn were an integral part of political culture. It is a reminder of the living Anglo-Saxon world, dominated by talk and not texts, gossip not parchment. This world is inevitably lost, but we should eavesdrop where we can.

Appendix

Folk Motifs in the Vita et Miracula sancti Kenelmi

Motif	Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* Number	Description
Kenelm's two sisters, one wicked, one good	P 252.1	Two sisters
	K 2212	Treacherous sister usually elder
	K 2212.0.3	Treacherous queen has her brother killed
Motifs which involve good sisters	P 253.2	Faithful to transformed brother
	R 158	Rescues brother
Wicked sister plots with Kenelm's tutor to murder the prince, bribing Æscberht with a share of the kingdom	Q 112.01	Kingdom as a reward
	Q 112	Half the kingdom as a reward
Kenelm's dream of a giant tree with himself at the top of it	K 983.1	Tree cut down to get the victim at the top
Kenelm escapes from the tree as a bird	D. 150 ff, E 327.5, E 322.4, G 263.1.5	Transformations of the hero or another character as a bird
Kenelm's dream interpreted as a presage of his murder	D 1810.8.2.3	Murder made known in a dream
	D 1814.2	Advice from a dream
	D 1819.2	Deception revealed in a dream
	D 1812.3.3ff	Future revealed in a dream
Æscberht takes Kenelm out hunting in order to kill him	K 917	Treacherous murder during a hunt
Kenelm's flowering staff	D 1673	Staff blossoms
	A 2624	Plant grows from staff of holy person
Kenelm is beheaded and catches his own head	F 511.0.4	Man carries his head under his arm
Milk-white dove appears as Kenelm dies	E 613.0.1	Reincarnation of murdered child as a bird
	D 150ff	Man is transformed into bird
	E 722.1.4	Soul leaves the body as bird
Miraculous cow pasture at the place where Kenelm was slain	F 974.1	Grass will not grow where a murdered person's blood has spilt
	D 1318.16	Speaking earth reveals murder
	D 934	Magic turf
	D 965.12	Magic grass
	F 979.18	Grass grows anew nightly
	F 817	Extraordinary grass

Motif	Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* Number	Description
Cow gives miraculous yield of milk	B 597	Cow gives miraculous yield of milk through virtue of the saint
	D 1652.3.1	Cow with inexhaustible supply of milk
	D 2156.2	Miraculous increase of milk from cow
Place of Kenelm's corpse revealed by a letter from heaven	B 291.1.0.1	Bird as carrier of letter
Cwoenthryth chants a psalm backwards to prevent the recovery of the body	D 1985.2	Invisibility by reciting formula backwards
	G 257.2	Reading the Bible backwards causes a witch to reveal herself
	D 1812.2.1, G 224.8, 473.5.2	Other backwards incidents
Cwoenthryth's eyeballs fall out of their sockets	Q 551.6.5.2	Eyes drop out of a blasphemer's head

POETICS AND THE PAST:
MAKING HISTORY WITH OLD ENGLISH POETRY

Elizabeth M. Tyler

This essay is an attempt to take a historicized look at the poetics of Old English verse. At its centre lies close reading: a detailed, and very literary, examination of the ways in which poetic form and style determine *what* is said in Old English verse and *how* it is said — fundamental aspects of the narrative of this poetry. Although I emphasize the highly conventional nature of secular Old English verse, I want to avoid going down the road of saying that, because these texts are governed by literary convention, they are of little value as historical sources. Rather, through the close analysis of poetic diction, I look at literary convention — the nature of the narrative — as historically active, significant, and revealing. My interest lies with approaching the social meaning of the traditional form of Old English poetry through close engagement with poetic language. To pursue this aim, I will look closely at the language of treasure across the poetic corpus and then in *The Battle of Maldon* in order to bring the study of poetics together with recent work which has opened up to view the social and political ideologies of Old English secular poetry in late Anglo-Saxon England. In the process of using such close reading to present an active view of the conventionality of Old English verse, I hope to make two main points: first, that the sophisticated balance of tradition and innovation which marks Old English poetics cannot be fully recognized if style and form are studied apart from the society which created and maintained the verse; and second, that the form and style of Old English verse has much to tell us about late Anglo-Saxon society's relationship with the past.[1]

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[1] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations of Old English poetry will be taken from *The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. by G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie, 6 vols (New York, 1932–53). All translations of Old English are my own.

Ahistorical Poetics and Apoetic History

Among the most striking features of the study of the style of Old English poetry is its largely ahistorical character. The reason for this lies with the real difficulty of dating much Old English verse. First, the nature of Old English verse — suspended between orality and literacy in ways modern scholars find hard to conceptualize (or even imagine) and copied down in a culture where written texts were not fixed entities to which a scribe/poet avoided making significant additions — means that many Old English poems are better understood as accretive rather than as the product of a poet composing at a single time and place. In a very real sense, many Old English poems do not belong to a single date or context. While advances in palaeographic, linguistic, and metrical studies may enable the recovery of aspects of earlier versions of poems such as *Beowulf*, on a fundamental level the poems as we have them in manuscripts remain the products of the period in which those manuscripts were written. Secondly, the form and style of the verse, which remained remarkably stable over the course of the Anglo-Saxon period, was highly conventional. This conventionality extends beyond the role of the formula in verse composition and lends the verse a timeless quality which discourages attempts to approach the style of Old English verse historically.[2] However, such a reaction muddles the difficulty of dating the poetry with the timelessness of the style of the verse and, as a result, passes over the significance of this timelessness.

The ahistorical study of Old English poetics by literary scholars is matched by what we might term the apoetical study of Old English verse by historians. Historians have tended to use secular verse as a historical source in ways which take little or no account of the requirements and conventions of style and form, or of the possibility of artistry. The driving force behind such apoetical uses of

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[2] On the difficulty of dating Old English verse, the importance of manuscript versions of poems, and the composition of an Old English poem as a process, see especially Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse* (Cambridge, 1990); Roy M. Liuzza, 'On the Dating of *Beowulf*', in *Beowulf: Basic Readings*, ed. by Peter Baker (New York, 1994), pp. 281–302; Carol Braun Pasternack, *The Textuality of Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1995), chapters 1 and 6; Pauline E. Head, *Representation and Design: Tracing a Hermeneutics of Old English Poetry* (Albany, NY, 1997), esp. the introduction; and Michael Lapidge, 'The Archetype of *Beowulf*', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 29 (2000), 5–41. For a survey of the study of style, see Daniel G. Calder, 'The Study of Style in Old English Poetry: A Historical Introduction', in *Old English Poetry: Essays on Style*, ed. by Daniel G. Calder (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 1–65.

Old English verse has been the desire to see it as, for example, Patrick Wormald did in his influential article 'Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy'. After noting the importance of weapons and gold in the poem, he wrote that

> It thus seems reasonable to use heroic literature as a window on the mentality of a warrior-aristocracy, whose existence and whose importance is reflected in other sources, historical, legal and archaeological, but whose preoccupations do not seem to be described elsewhere.[3]

The fundamental problem of using imaginative literature as a historical source in such a direct way is further compounded, in the case of *Beowulf* and other Old English poems, by the conventional poetics which govern their composition.

Despite the conceptual problem involved in using *Beowulf* to indicate the values of the post-conversion aristocracy, Wormald's article was, and remains, groundbreaking. Locating the poem in the context of the *Eigenkirche*, and thus in a context where secular and ecclesiastical worlds are inseparably intertwined, freed *Beowulf* from the straightjacket of being read as a poem written for a monk like Bede. Even more importantly, Wormald used the poem to change our understanding of the Anglo-Saxon Church, arguing that the monastery that preserved *Beowulf* was actually more typical of Anglo-Saxon monasticism than Jarrow. Significantly, in using *Beowulf* to develop his view of Anglo-Saxon monasticism, Wormald was not reading the text as a window onto the culture which produced it; rather he was asking what sort of society would produce and preserve a poem like *Beowulf*. In what follows, I aim to take a historicized approach to the style of Old English verse by asking a similar question: why did late Anglo-Saxon society continue to maintain the timeless conventions of Old English verse?

The Poetics of Treasure

Treasure, which is virtually ubiquitous in Old English verse, occurs in a variety of contexts from the secular to the religious, the mundane to the thematically

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[3] C. P. Wormald, 'Bede, *Beowulf* and the Conversion of the Anglo-Saxon Aristocracy', in *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. by R. T. Farrell, BAR, British Series, 46 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 32–95 (p. 36). For similar approaches to *Beowulf,* see N. P. Brooks, 'Arms, Status and Warfare in Late-Saxon England', in *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, ed. by David Hill, BAR, British Series, 59 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 81–103 (pp. 91–92); Henry R. Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1984), p. 17; and James Campbell, 'Bede's *Reges* and *Principes*,' in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 85–98 (pp. 92–93).

central.[4] In secular verse from *Beowulf* to *The Battle of Maldon* and even the chronicle poem commemorating the death of Edward the Confessor, treasure is especially found in the context of gift-giving. In secular and religious verse alike, treasure as a symbol for wealth occurs in connection with the theme of transience. The topos of the just storing up treasure for themselves in heaven (itself frequently described in terms of treasure), by doing good works and especially by giving alms, appears widely in religious verse. The sheer pleasure in describing treasure evinced in *Beowulf* equally marks the Old English religious poem *The Phoenix*, a work based on the Late Antique Latin poem of Lactantius. Very few poems do not mention treasure in one way or another, and this prevalence is of consequence for our understanding of an Anglo-Saxon *ars poetica* since it suggests that treasure is not simply a common motif but rather a part of the fabric of poetic discourse in a manner analogous to stylistic phenomena such as formulas, variation, and kennings: you almost cannot have an Old English poem without it.[5] Various aspects of the social function and nature of treasure as represented in the verse can be looked at to draw out the implications of its ubiquity for Old English poetics; in what follows I will look closely at the treatment of gold and silver, in particular.

After 700, the predominant precious metal in England was silver: that gold was rare can be seen from both the archaeological record and written sources. From the end of the seventh century, the supply of gold in Western Europe markedly decreased, and most surviving jewellery after this date, even the most obviously high-status pieces as the Fuller disc brooch, were made of silver. Furthermore, silver became more and more important with the development of a sophisticated monetary economy whose primary unit was the silver penny. In Old English prose and in Anglo-Latin verse and prose, references to silver are plentiful in texts as diverse as documents such as wills, charters, and law codes, religious works such as homilies, Alfredian translations, saints' lives, and poetry;

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[4] Some of the material which follows was presented in an earlier article in which I argued that close attention to the workings of the Old English verse line showed us a poetry that was so conventional over such a long period of time that it could not be used as a historical source. I am no longer satisfied with that view and would like to revisit some of that material to address what poetics can tell us about Anglo-Saxon history. For the earlier article, see Elizabeth M. Tyler, 'Treasure and Convention in Old English Verse', *Notes and Queries*, n.s., 43 (1996), 2–13.

[5] For a brief introduction to the form of Old English poetry, which includes discussion of meter, formulas, variation, and kennings, see Stanley B. Greenfield and David G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (New York, 1986), pp. 122–33.

although gold continues to be mentioned as part of display culture, silver has become the principal precious metal.[6] The material culture of vernacular verse differs sharply. In the roughly 30,000 lines of extent verse, there are twenty-seven references to silver in comparison to 184 references to gold.[7] Looking closely at these twenty-seven instances, with attention to formulas, alliteration, and word collocations, illustrates how archaic notions of treasure are part of the fabric of Old English verse — deeply imbedded in its mechanics.[8]

[6] For a fuller discussion of the representation of gold and silver in the archaeological, prose, and poetic records, see Tyler, 'Treasure and Convention', pp. 6–8. Scholars disagree regarding the nature of display in late Anglo-Saxon England. Key points include the extent to which silver replaced gold as the metal of display in late Anglo-Saxon England, whether the scarcity of archaeological finds of gold reflects the reality of the period, and whether patterns of display had changed, particularly in response to the Church's teaching on wealth. See David M. Wilson, *Anglo-Saxon Ornamental Metalwork 700–1100 in the British Museum* (London, 1964), p. 10; David A. Hinton, 'Late Anglo-Saxon Metal-work: An Assessment', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 4 (1974), 171–80; Hinton, 'Late Saxon Treasure and Bullion' in *Ethelred the Unready,* ed. by Hill, pp. 135–58; and Hinton, *Archaeology, Economy and Society: England from the Fifth to the Fifteenth Century* (London, 1990), pp. 52, 61; Brooks, 'Arms, Status and Warfare', pp. 86–87, 96–97; C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Manchester, 1982), chapters 2 and 7; and Simon Keynes, 'The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon', in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. by Donald Scragg (Oxford, 1991), pp. 81–113 (pp. 101–02). For a recent discussion of the shift of display towards textiles, food consumption, and ecclesiastical donation in late Anglo-Saxon England, see Robin Fleming, 'The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 23 (2001), 1–22. For my purpose in this essay, the central point remains that the shift towards silver as a metal of display does not register in the poetic corpus.

[7] *Genesis A* 1769, 2720, 2732, *Daniel* 60, *Christ and Satan* 577, *Andreas* 338, *Soul and Body I* 58, *Dream of the Rood* 77, *Elene* 1025, *Soul and Body II* 55, *Riddle 14* 2, *Riddle 20* 10, *Riddle 55* 4, *Ruin* 35, *Riddle 67* 15, *Paris Psalter* 65. 9, 67. 13, 67. 27, 104. 32, 113. 12, 118. 72, 134. 15, *Meters of Boethius* 21.21, *Solomon and Saturn* 31, 64, 143, *Instructions for Christians* 122. These instances of silver can be found using the on-line *Dictionary of Old English* Old English Corpus (<http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/o/oec/>). The printed concordance to the Old English poetic corpus is also useful: *A Concordance to the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*, ed. by J. B. Bessinger, Jr, and P. H. Smith (Ithaca, NY, 1978). Roberta Frank notes the exclusion of silver from *Beowulf* and contrast this with the presence of silver artefacts among the treasures of Sutton Hoo; see her '*Beowulf* and Sutton Hoo: The Odd Couple', in *Voyage to the Other World: The Legacy of Sutton Hoo*, ed. by C. B. Kendall and P. S. Wells (Minneapolis, 1992), pp. 47–64 (p. 55).

[8] Collocation is defined simply as the tendency of words to appear together; to facilitate use of the electronic Old English Corpus, I have defined collocation as the appearance of two words together within the same sentence as edited in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records*.

In twenty of the twenty-seven instances of silver, it occurs with gold, and in nineteen of those gold precedes silver: nine times in the half-line formula 'gold ond sylfor', twice in the half-line formula 'ne gold ne sylfor', and once in the similar half-line 'gold ne sylfor' as for example in these lines, all bound together by alliteration on 'g':

> ond gyredon me   **golde ond seolfre** (*Dream of the Rood* 77)[9]
>
> **ne gold ne sylfor**   ne þinra goda nan (*Soul and Body II* 55)[10]
>
> **gold ne seolfor**.   Ic eow goda gehwæs (*Andreas* 338)[11]

In the remaining seven instances, gold and silver occur on separate lines — and silver is metrically free of gold. In these seven, only in the Old English Psalm 67 does silver come before gold:

> fiðeru beoþ culfran   fægeres **seolfres**
> and hire bæc scineð   beorhtan **golde**. (*Paris Psalter* 67. 13)[12]

But the versifier of the psalms simply follows the order of the Psalter here.

A glance at the four instances from the *Paris Psalter* in which gold and silver appear in both the Old English and the Latin source text underscores the precedence of gold. In three cases silver, *argentum*, is mentioned before gold, *aurum*, in the Latin, but the Old English poet has switched the two around and used the half-line 'gold ond sylfor'. So in *Paris Psalter* 104, we find that gold comes before silver in the Old English but not in the Latin:

> And his þæt gode folc   golde and seolfre
> geweorþade   and hi wislice
> leofe lædde;   næs þæra leoda ða
> ænig untrum   yldra ne gingra. (*Paris Psalter* 104. 32)[13]

In contrast, the Latin reads:

> et eduxit eos in argento et auro
> et non erat in tribubus eorum infirmus.[14]

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[9] 'and they adorned me with gold and silver'.

[10] 'not gold, nor silver, not any of your goods'.

[11] 'gold nor silver. I to you of every good thing'.

[12] 'The wings of the dove are of fair silver and its beak shines with bright gold.'

[13] 'And he adorned his, that good people, with gold and silver and wisely led them, beloved, out; there were not then any infirm among those people, neither old nor young.'

[14] Psalm 104. 37 (Roman Psalter) from *Le Psautier Romain et les autres Anciens Psautiers Latins*, ed. by R. Weber (Rome, 1953), p. 261.

Two points can be made from all of this. First, there is a tendency to specify silver only as a coordinate of gold, and secondly, the conventions of Old English poetic diction exert a strong pressure — since gold comes before silver in the established half-line formula 'gold ond sylfor', the versifier will conform to the norms of Old English poetic diction rather than render his source more faithfully.

Fifteen instances of silver do not occur in a neat half-line with gold. Eight of these instances of silver occur on the same verse-line as *sinc*, a term for treasure found only in verse. *Sinc* occurs seventy-eight times in Old English verse where it alliterates with a range of words beginning with 's'. Instances where *sinc* alliterates with silver include:

> **since** ond **seolfre**,   Salomones templ (*Daniel* 60)[15]
>
> **since** ond **seolfre**   ond mec on sele weorþað (*Riddle 20* 10)[16]
>
> **sinc** searobunden,   ond **seolfres** dæl (*Riddle 55* 4)[17]
>
> seah on **sinc**, on **sylfor**,   on searogimmas (*Ruin* 35)[18]

As can be seen from these four examples, the *sinc* and *seolfor* association extends to include the formula 'since ond seolfre' as well as to being an alliterative pair. The figure of eight for *seolfor* and *sinc* contrasts markedly with those for the appearance of silver with any other word for treasure, including *maðm*, *hord*, *frætwe*, and *gestreon*. For example, *maðm* collocates with silver only once (and in this one instance, in *The Meters of Boethius* 21.21, the silver actually modifies *sinc*), although it collocates twenty-one times with gold. Furthermore in all eight of the appearances of the *sinc* and *seolfor* collocation, the two elements always appear on the same line, and thus alliteration is always a factor. This, coupled with the scarcity of collocations of silver with any other treasure word, indicates that verse form — in this case alliteration — rather than the reality of Anglo-Saxon treasure, represents the stronger factor in the appearance of silver.

We are left then with four cases where silver neither alliterates with *sinc* nor appears in a passage with gold. Three of these appear in Old English verse translated from the Psalter or Genesis where silver appears alone. For example,

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[15] 'of treasure and of silver, Solomon's temple'.

[16] 'with treasure and with silver and he honours me in the hall'.

[17] 'treasure skilfully bound, and a portion of silver'.

[18] 'he looked on treasure, on silver, on precious gems'.

the Psalmist compares the trials of the Israelites to the testing of silver by fire, a metaphor which the versifier of the *Paris Psalter* maintains:

> Ure costade god   clæne fyre
> soðe dome,   swa man seolfor deð,
> þonne man hit aseoðeð   swyðe mid fyre. (*Paris Psalter* 65. 9)[19]

The mention of silver at line 2720 of *Genesis A* may have been triggered by the reference to silver which occurs just two verses later in the Bible. This leaves only one instance of silver by itself in all of Old English verse, from the poem *Solomon and Saturn*; a single poem hardly constitutes a norm, especially given the esoteric nature of *Solomon and Saturn*.

I have repeatedly mentioned translation as I examined the twenty-seven instances of silver; translation emerges as a major source of silver in Old English verse. Also, in the preceding discussion the same poems were referred to over and over again. Occurrences of silver are not evenly spread throughout the corpus of Old English verse, but group together in a limited number of texts — most notably the *Paris Psalter* (with seven), *The Riddles* (with four), *Solomon and Saturn* (with three), and *Genesis A* (with three).[20] Despite the fact that silver constitutes the vast majority of the precious metal available in England after the seventh century, including that used in prestige jewellery, silver is the exception for Old English verse — very often prompted by a Latin original and appearing repeatedly in a small number of texts. The alliteration, collocations, and formulas surrounding the twenty-seven appearances of silver illustrate the pressure which verse form and poetic convention could exert on what is said and what is not said in Old English verse. But, more importantly, they illustrate how a convention of subject matter rooted in an out-dated culture of gold could become stylistic and lexical convention — part of the poetics, the narrative fabric, of Old English verse.

The relationship between *maðm* and *gold*, mentioned above as collocating on twenty-one occasions, will allow further consideration both of the subtly distinct semantic fields of specific terms for treasure and of the role formulas play in

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[19] 'God tested us with pure fire in true judgement, as one does silver when one completely refines it.'

[20] On the atypical use of poetic convention in the Old English *Riddles,* see my forthcoming *Old English Poetics: The Aesthetics of the Familiar in Anglo-Saxon England.* On the distinctive use of the Old English poetic tradition in the *Paris Psalter,* see M. S. Griffith, 'Poetic Language and the *Paris Psalter*: The Decay of the Old English Poetic Tradition', *Anglo-Saxon England,* 20 (1991), 167–86.

conserving the archaic material culture of Old English verse.[21] In the *Seafarer*, treasure buried with the dead is disparaged:

> Þeah þe græf wille   golde stregan
> broþor his geborenum,   byrgan be deadum,
> maþmum mislicum   þæt hine mid wille,
> ne mæg þære sawle   þe biþ synna ful
> gold to geoce   for godes egsan,
> þonne he hit ær hydeð   þenden he her leofað. (*Seafarer* 97–102)[22]

In contrast, *Maxims I* includes a gnomic expression on the importance of treasure in a gift-giving culture:

> Maþþum oþres weorð,
> gold mon sceal gifan. (*Maxims I* 154–55)[23]

In *Beowulf*, the dragon guards his hoard:

> Weard unhiore,
> gearo guðfreca,   goldmaðmas heold,
> eald under eorðan. (*Beowulf* 2413–15)[24]

These examples, while not comprehensive, are representative of the appearance of *maðm* and *gold* in two important ways. First, the association of the semantic field of *maðm*, not with treasure in a general sense, but in particular with weapons which are either treasure themselves, perhaps (for instance, because of age or ornamentation with precious metal) means that *maðm* appears in secular contexts rather than, for example, in descriptions of heaven or creation where other language for treasure is frequently found.[25] *Sinc*, in contrast, is a more general term for treasure which, unlike *maðm*, almost exclusively denotes a group of

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[21] *Elene* 1256, *Gifts of Men* 58, *Seafarer* 97, 97, *Maxims I* 154, *Riddle 55* 7, *Beowulf* 1020, 1027, 1050, 1900, 2101, 2190, 2413, 2747, 2756, 3010, 3014, *Judith* 323, 334, *Meters of Boethius* 21.20, *Waldere B* 4.

[22] 'Although a brother may wish to strew the grave with gold for his kinsman, to bury him among the dead with various treasures that he wishes to be with him, before the fear of God, gold, when he hides it previously while he lives here, cannot be of help to the soul which is full of sin.'

[23] 'A treasure enriches another, gold must be given.'

[24] 'The fierce guardian, ready warrior, protected the gold treasures, old under the earth.'

[25] The association of *maðm* with weapons does not, of course, exclude the term from religious poems where we find description of battles and their aftermaths, as for example, when *maðm* is included among the treasure the Hebrews bring to Judith after the defeat of the Assyrians in the Old English poem *Judith*.

objects rather than a single object and also unlike *maðm* is often used to describe ornamentation. Hence *sinc*, but not *maðm*, adorns the gates of heaven.[26] Words like *sinc* and *maðm* may appear to modern readers as virtually synonymous, with the archaic *sinc* remaining current in verse because it was useful for fulfilling the requirement of alliteration. While this is certainly an important factor, it is only part of the story. Verse consistently maintains the fine distinctions in semantic fields of words because poets know these distinctions, despite the fact that, as is the case with *sinc*, some words are restricted to verse and their semantic fields can only have been known from the verse tradition and not from general use.

The four examples given for *maðm* and *gold* are also representative in that they do not suggest that any set formulas link the two words. As far as can be ascertained from the surviving corpus, *gold* and *maðm* never appear together in any phrase which can be classified as in any way a formula: this, for example, is in sharp contrast to *seolfor* which repeatedly appears in half-line formulas both with *gold* and with *sinc*. The patterns which govern the association of *maðm* and *gold* need explication in light of the limited place of gold in Anglo-Saxon material culture after 700. The combination of the apparent archaism of the *gold* and *maðm* collocation and its prevalence in a wide range of verse suggests that there were established and conventional ways of discussing treasure in Old English verse which continued undiminished even in such probably late poems as *Judith*. Yet, because this conventional link of *gold* and *maðm* is not formulaic, it cannot be said to be preserved because it makes it easier to fulfil the metrical and alliterative requirements of the line, which is so often given credit for exerting a strong conservative force on Old English verse. Rather the evidence indicates that there were traditional ways of describing treasure in verse throughout the Anglo-Saxon period which were not perpetuated by formulaic diction and yet which continued to be recognized by poets even in late Anglo-Saxon England.[27]

The poetics of treasure as manifest in the treatment of *gold*, *seolfor*, *sinc*, and *maðm* are governed by form in a way which cannot be fully understood apart from history — from changes in material culture over the course of the Anglo-Saxon period. And yet, the gap between the material world of poetry and the material world of the Anglo-Saxon England in which much of the poetry was composed appears to make Old English poetics necessarily ahistorical and thus poses quite fundamental problems for using *Beowulf* and other Old English verse

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[26] On the semantic precision of words for treasure, see my forthcoming *Old English Poetics*.

[27] For further discussion of formulas, see my forthcoming *Old English Poetics*.

as a historical source for the behaviour and ideas of the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy. Since we cannot tell if the world portrayed in a written heroic poem is contemporary with its composition (whenever that might be) or if that world is a part of the genre of poetry, we need to remain alert to the meaning of verse form and to why poets chose to use this conventional form. But this emphasis on form and its meaning should emphatically not take us away from history. That the fineness of poetic convention could not be understood in solely formulaic or even formal terms brings us to the importance of people, poets, and audiences in maintaining the distinctive unity of Old English poetic form and content. People, of course, always exist in specific times and places, and it is people, not form, who maintain the timeless aspects of Old English verse, and thus poetics, however archaic and conventional, is always part of history.

Timeless Poetics in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries

The previous section, with its concern to establish the conventions of Old English verse, did not consider how these conventions may have operated at any particular point in Anglo-Saxon history. In the second half of this article, I will look at the treasure of *The Battle of Maldon* to consider how timeless poetic conventions might have worked around the turn of the first millennium. Before doing this, I want to explain my choice of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. The tenth century was a critical period for secular Old English verse. First, beginning with *The Battle of Brunanburh*, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle for 937, we see the distinctive use of Old English poetry, perhaps under the influence of Old Norse skaldic praise poetry, to commemorate contemporary events and people. This new subject matter marks a sea change in the use of secular Old English verse which was previously restricted to recounting continental and Scandinavian legendary figures dating from the Age of Migration. In the shift from the Age of Migration, the focus of the poetry changes as well, becoming more narrowly concerned with the politics of the battlefield and leaving behind an interest in the politics of the court, such as we see in *Beowulf* and *Widsith*. The radical disappearance of women —who were central in *Beowulf*, *Deor*, and *Waldere* — from secular poetry after *Brunanburh* is a telling barometer of the changing concerns of secular verse. As England began to emerge as a unified kingdom which included both once independent kingdoms like Mercia and Northumbria and Danish settlers, poetry became overtly political — deployed to legitimize West Saxon hegemony by representing

this expansion in terms familiar (though also transformed) from poetry like *Beowulf*.[28]

The second important factor to note regarding the tenth century is that secular poetry about the legendary past has a clear late Anglo-Saxon context. Like most Old English poetry, *Beowulf*, *Widsith*, *The Finnsburg Fragment*, *Waldere*, and *Deor* are all recorded in tenth- or early eleventh-century manuscripts, and even if one accepts an early date for *Beowulf* and other legendary verse, the question of what the poetry was doing — and I mean that verb actively — in late Anglo-Saxon England remains. Finally, although the accretive nature of individual poems, and the conventionality of the poetic tradition more generally, encourages us to think of Old English verse as the product of *an* Anglo-Saxon England which changed little from the fifth to the eleventh centuries, this composite Anglo-Saxon England is a fiction which impedes our ability to understand Old English verse. There is a vast difference between the unified England of the tenth century, governed by a nascent bureaucracy which involved the sophisticated use of a monetary economy, and early Anglo-Saxon England, where kingship was only emerging and personal bonds, often fostered by gift-giving, between a lord and his men were fundamental to the control of small territories.[29] Focusing on the late tenth and early eleventh centuries will give a much better understanding of Old English poetics, both in aesthetic and social terms, than if we think in terms of an imaginary Anglo-Saxon England that never existed.

Having explained why my focus lies with the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, I would like to return to poetics and the timeless quality of Old English verse. In many ways, as we have seen when we looked at the poetic culture of gold, the Age of Migration is built into Old English verse: religious and

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[28] On the role and politicization of secular Old English poetry in the tenth century, including its relationship with skaldic verse, see Roberta Frank, 'Did Anglo-Saxon Audiences Have a Skaldic Tooth?', *Scandinavian Studies*, 59 (1987), 338–55; John D. Niles, 'Skaldic Technique in *Brunanburh*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 59 (1987), 256–66; Niles, 'Locating *Beowulf* in Literary History', *Exemplaria*, 5 (1993), 79–109; Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 451–60; Janet Thormann, 'The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* Poems and the Making of the English Nation', in *Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity,* ed. by Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles (Gainsville, 1997), pp. 60–85; and Matthew Townend, 'Pre-Cnut Praise-Poetry in Viking Age England', *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 51 (2000), 349–70.

[29] James Campbell, in particular, has been responsible for developing a maximalist view of the late Anglo-Saxon state as sophisticated polity: see the essays collected in his *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000).

secular, early and late. But this does not render tradition simply a passive (that is an inevitable and essentially meaningless) aspect of verse composition. Indeed, it is all too easy, especially when involved in formalist approaches to the conventional style of individual poems, to imagine that the poetics of Old English verse somehow had a momentum of its own, an existence outside of the structures of society. Our composite notion of an Anglo-Saxon England allows us to forget that it is stranger for a poetic tradition to maintain a high degree of stability for more than six hundred years than for it to have changed.[30] To compose classical Old English verse in the tenth and eleventh centuries, when other, less strict, forms of verse were emerging in English was a conscious choice, and the conventionality of Old English poetics would not have been perpetuated unless it had a value, unless society (some particular part of society, a group of people) had a stake in it and a use for it.[31] *Beowulf*, with its insistence from its opening lines that, whenever it was composed, it is a story about long ago and far away, overtly claims the timelessness of the verse tradition.[32] Thus this poem about sixth-century Danes alerts us that Anglo-Saxon poets and audiences were aware of the poetry's timeless qualities which in turn suggests that this feature was a central part of the attraction and meaning of the Old English poetic tradition.

Tradition and Innovation: The Battle of Maldon

By 991 and the battle at Maldon, the now established West Saxon domination of a united England was, in the face of Viking raids, newly precarious. The fragmentary *The Battle of Maldon* recounts the defeat of Byrhtnoth, ealdorman of

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[30] Similarities between the form of Old English verse and that of continental Germanic verse indicate that they share a common origin which pre-dates the movement of Germanic peoples to Britain.

[31] On classical and non-classical forms of verse in late Anglo-Saxon England, see *The Battle of Brunanburh*, ed. by Alistair Campbell (London, 1938), pp. 32–33; Angus McIntosh, 'Wulfstan's Prose', Gollancz Lecture, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 35 (1949), 109–42; R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia, 1992), pp. 251–68; and most recently Thomas A. Bredehoft, *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 72–118.

[32] On the past in *Beowulf*, see Roberta Frank, 'The *Beowulf* Poet's Sense of History', in *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield*, ed. by Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (Kalamazoo, 1982), pp. 53–65, and Fred C. Robinson, *Beowulf and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, 1985).

Essex, and his men at Maldon while defending England.[33] Byrhtnoth fights as the man of King Æthelred (reigned 978–1016); the poet emphasizes this relationship with word play on *æðele* when Byrhtnoth is first wounded:

> Forlet þa drenga sum   daroð of handa,
> fleogan of folman,   þæt se to forð gewat
> þurh ðone æþelan   Æþelredes þegen. (*Battle of Maldon* 149–51)[34]

Fighting for his West Saxon king, Byrhtnoth leads an army which, though fighting in Essex, is not just local but includes Mercians, men of Danish descent, and a Northumbrian hostage. These are the provinces, loyal to the West Saxons, in battle against a Viking enemy who threatens the stability of the whole English kingdom. While the English are carefully named, with attention given to details of lineage and place of origin, the Vikings, who demand tribute and then deal a heavy defeat to the English when this is refused, are nameless and, at points, hardly human, described as *wælwulfas*, 'slaughter wolves' (line 96). Commemorating an event and a hero known from other sources, *Maldon* is a poem which invites, and has received, historicist attention: earlier concern with whether or not the poem could be considered historically accurate in terms of events has been superseded by work which draws attention to the poem's political and social ideology.[35] We have come to see the poem as appealing to the past to legitimize West Saxon domination of a united English kingdom. Here I want to build on this work but return to the level of form and style. Looking closely at the language of treasure shows that the *Maldon* poet has adapted the conventions of the timeless poetics of Old English verse with bold innovation to negotiate political and social change: his timelessness was far from static. Treasure was highly contested in late Anglo-Saxon England, and the poet responds to its heightened symbolic and real value by weaving it into the meaning of his poem. The result is a poem which appeals to tradition in order to examine and raise questions about the social fabric of late Anglo-Saxon England.

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[33] All quotations are from Donald Scragg's edition of the poem: *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester, 1981).

[34] 'Then one of the warriors let a spear fly from his hands, from his palms, so that it went through Æthelred's noble thegn too deeply.'

[35] See esp. John D. Niles, 'Maldon and Mythopoesis', *Mediaevalia*, 17 (1994 for 1991), 89–121. Although my conclusions about *Maldon* disagree with those offered by Niles in this article, my reading of the poem builds on and is indebted to his alertness to the poem's social and political engagement.

The sharp contrast between the culture of treasure found in the poem and the strictly monetary concerns of the Chronicle offers a way into the *Maldon* poet's adaptation of his traditional poetics to the needs of very uncertain times. The versions 'C', 'D', and 'E' of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recount the battle at Maldon in terms which make clear that, in its aftermath, the Vikings were bought off with silver coins:

> Her wæs Gypeswic gehergod, 7 æfter þam swiðe raðe wæs Brihtnoð ealdorman ofslegen æt Mældune; 7 on þam geare man gerædde þæt man geald ærest gafol denescum mannum, for ðam miclan brogan þe hi worhtan be ðam særiman; þæt wæs ærest x þusend punda; þæne ræd gerædde ærest Syric arcebisceop.[36]

Viking hoards of the period are composed almost entirely of coin or hack silver (silver cut up into pieces the weight of coins), with only small quantities of gold, reflecting the flourishing monetary economy of late Anglo-Saxon England.[37] In contrast, *Maldon* imagines the events of 991 to have taken place in a society where gold was still exchanged, when the poet recounts that the Viking messenger demands that the raiders be bought off with gold:

> Me sendon to þe   sæmen snelle,
> heton ðe secgan   þæt þu most sendan raðe
> beagas wið gebeorge;   and eow betere is
> þæt ge þisne garræs   mid **gafole** forgyldon
> þon[ne] we swa hearde   [hi]lde dælon.
> Ne þurfe we us spillan   gif ge spedaþ to þam;
> we willað wið þam **golde   grið** fæstnian.
> Gyf þu þ[æ]t **gerædest**   þe her ricost eart,
> þæt þu þine leoda   lysan wille,
> syllan sæmannum   on hyra sylfra dom
> feoh wið freode   and niman **frið** æt us,
> we willaþ mid þæm sceattum   us to scype gangan,
> on flot feran,   and eow **friþes** healdan. (*Battle of Maldon*, 29–41)[38]

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[36] *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. V: *MS C*, ed. by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 2001), p. 86. 'In this year Ipswich was harried, and very soon after that Ealdorman Byrhtnoth was slain at Maldon; and in that year, it was first decided to pay tribute to the Danish men, on account of the great terror which they wrought along the coast; that was first 10,000 pounds; Archbishop Sigeric first advised that policy.'

[37] Mark Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage and the Payment of Tribute', in *Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. by Scragg, pp. 156–69 (pp. 164–65).

[38] 'Bold seamen sent me to you, commanded me to tell you that you should quickly send rings for peace; and it will be better for you that you buy off this battle with tribute than that we share in such fierce battle. It is not necessary for us to kill each other, if you are rich enough

The language of treasure in these lines deserves attention. By staging the demand for tribute as a one-to-one exchange between Byrhtnoth and the Viking messenger, and by placing heavy emphasis on Byrhtnoth's relationship with his people and his need to protect them, the poet recalls an older culture of treasure, where gift-giving and tribute created social obligations within and between communities. Furthermore, the language used to denote the content of the demanded tribute is also skilfully handled. The poet of *Maldon*, a late poem, knows that gold, rather than the much more common silver (which he never mentions), is the stuff of poetry.[39] An archaic poetic convention determines what the poet says, and he represents the present in a timeless manner that would have been visibly distinct from the material culture of late Anglo-Saxon England. But the material realities of the 990s are not forgotten. In the prose of the period, *feoh* and *sceatt* generally denote coins, and so by using these terms, the poet can refer to coins without mentioning silver. In verse, while *feoh* and *sceatt* do refer to coins, they can be used as more general terms for treasure. Thus the poet has chosen flexible words to balance, and link, present realities with an imagined past.

The alliteration of *gold* with *grið* across the caesura, as the Viking offers peace for treasure, encapsulates the skill with which the poet controls his traditional poetics and brings us to the heart of how he makes new meaning with archaic convention. While *gold* is traditional, *grið,* from the Old Norse, meaning 'truce' and more broadly 'peace', appears in poetry only in this instance in *Maldon*.[40] The poet has deftly put this Old Norse loan word, along with other Scandinavian words and idioms, into the mouth of the Viking messenger in what Fred Robinson has acutely identified as the 'first literary use of dialect in English'.[41] But the *Maldon* poet's use of the word is more topical than simply getting a

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for that; we wish to establish peace in return for gold. If you, who are most powerful here, decide on that, that you wish to redeem your people, to give to the seamen, according to their own assessment, money for friendship and to take peace from us, we will take ourselves to our ships with the *sceattas,* set out to sea and keep peace with you.'

[39] Hence it is unwise to rely on *The Battle of Maldon* as evidence for the continued circulation of gold in late Anglo-Saxon England; see for instance Blackburn, 'Æthelred's Coinage', p. 165; and Keynes, 'Historical Context', pp. 101–02; and see above, pp. 230–31.

[40] For the meaning of *grið*, see Christine Fell, '*Unfrið*: An Approach to a Definition', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research*, 21 (1982–83), 85–100 (pp. 86–92), and Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, vol. I: *Legislation and its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), p. 327.

[41] Fred C. Robinson, 'Some Aspects of the *Maldon* Poet's Artistry', repr. in his *The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays in Old English* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 122–37 (pp. 122–24).

Norse word in an appropriately Viking mouth, and the choice of *grið* along with *gold* reveals a poet taking part in contemporary debates about paying tribute. In the context of the last decade of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh century, the culture of treasure in the poem could not be simply left as a lifeless archaism, peripheral to the poem's meaning. The Vikings came to England in search of treasure; hence, both inside and outside the poem, the politics of paying tribute was hotly disputed.[42] The year 991 clearly marked a critical point in the debate over tribute: the Chronicle writer flags up 991 as the year in which tribute was first paid to the Vikings, although it was paid earlier.[43]

Outside of *Maldon*, in legal writing, charters, homilies, and the Chronicle, *grið* first occurs in a lawcode of King Edmund (reigned 939–46), but it does not appear regularly until the last decade of the tenth century and then becomes more common in eleventh-century texts.[44] In the Chronicle account of Æthelred's reign, *grið* is frequently used in the context of negotiations with the Vikings, and with the not only dishonourable but also unsuccessful practice of buying the Vikings off with tribute. The Chronicle for 983–1016 which covers most of Æthelred's reign (978–1016) was written retrospectively as a unit sometime between 1016 and 1023. Its account is pessimistically coloured by the knowledge that the Danes succeeded in conquering the English kingdom and that paying tribute was futile.[45] The entry for 1011 puts the case against paying tribute forcefully:

> Ealle þas ungesælða us gelumpon þuruh un**ræd**as þæt mon nolde him a timan **gafol** beodon oþþe wið gefeohtan. Ac þonne hi mæst to yfele gedon hæfdon, þonne nam mon **frið** 7 **grið** wið hi, 7 naþelæs for eallum þissum **griðe** 7 **gafole** hi ferdon æghweder flocmælum 7 heregodon ure earme folc, 7 hi rypton and slogon.[46]

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[42] On the importance of tribute in *Maldon*, see John Scattergood, '*The Battle of Maldon* and History', in *Literature and Learning in Medieval and Renaissance England: Essays Presented to Fitzroy Pyle*, ed. by John Scattergood (Dublin, 1984), pp. 11–24; and Niles, 'Maldon and Mythopoesis', pp. 89–90, 95–96, 100.

[43] Robinson, 'Some Aspects', pp. 127–28; and Niles, 'Maldon and Mythopoesis', p. 96.

[44] A full list of instances of *grið* in its various spellings can be found by consulting the on-line *Dictionary of Old English* Old English Corpus (<http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/o/oec/>).

[45] S. D. Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of King Æthelred the Unready', in *Ethelred the Unready,* ed. by Hill, pp. 227–54 (pp. 229–35).

[46] *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS C*, ed. by O'Brien O'Keeffe, p. 95. 'All these misfortunes happened to us through the foolish policy that it was not desired to offer them tribute or to fight against them in time. But when they had done the most harm, then peace and truce were

The lexical similarities this passage shares with the Viking messenger's speech in *Maldon* are clear: *grið* and *frið*, 'peace', call each other up, fighting and *gafol*, 'tribute', are juxtaposed, and the whole question of what is good *ræd*, 'advice, counsel', appears in both.[47] Wordplay on *ræd*, which extends throughout the poem, confirms the *Maldon* poet's preoccupation with the policy of paying tribute. Just before showing us the exchange between Byrhtnoth and the messenger, the poet describes how Byrhtnoth 'rad and **ræd**de' ('rode and instructed', line 18) amidst his men, emboldening them for the battle ahead. Then the Viking messenger calls on Byrhtnoth to *gerædan* ('decide on', line 36) tribute rather than battle, a demand the *anræd* ('resolute', line 44) ealdorman rejects. It is then with heavy irony that later in the poem the poet again denotes Byrhtnoth as *anræd* (line 132) at just the point when he sustains his first wound in an encounter which will end in his death. Not paying tribute is associated with the morally positive quality of *anræd* and yet the poet then associates this probity with defeat. The poet clearly sees that the result of not paying tribute is defeat, but that does not make him a supporter of buying off the Vikings. The *Maldon* poet deploys his poetic style, here the repetition of *ræd,* to develop his negative view of the much contested policy of paying tribute to the Vikings. Contemporary punning on *ræd*, in the context of disquiet about Æthelred's rule, assures that the repetitions of *ræd* in *Maldon* are firmly in the foreground of the poem.[48] The coupling of the archaic *gold* with the recently borrowed *grið* juxtaposes the glory of the heroic past with the grimness of the present which importantly allows us to see Old English verse in active dialogue with other discourses in the debate about tribute, rather than as naively representing Byrthnoth and his men as warriors from a fondly imagined heroic past.[49]

made with them, and nonetheless, despite all this truce and tribute, they went everywhere in armed bands and ravaged our miserable people, and they plundered and killed them.'

[47] On *grið* and *frið*, see further below, p. 246.

[48] On the wider currency of punning on the *ræd* element in Æthelred's name, as part of criticism of his reign, see Mary Clayton, 'Ælfric and Æthelred', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. by J. Roberts and J. Nelson (London, 2000), pp. 65–88.

[49] For other views of the poem's intervention in the debate on tribute, see Niles who interprets the poem as supporting 'Æthelred's policy of accommodation' and thus pro-tribute, and Scattergood who sees the poem as critical of the payment of tribute: Niles, 'Maldon and Mythopoesis', esp. p. 90; and Scattergood, '*Battle of Maldon*'. Niles furthermore argues that the poem does not take an ironic view of Byrthnoth or Æthelred (p. 91).

There is another strand to the poet's use of *grið* which brings the poem's topicality and its use of the past into sharper focus. The term draws attention to the poem's social as well as political agenda. Scholars have for some time recognized that *Maldon* is concerned with social hierarchy. Explicit references to social rank in the terms *eorl*, *eoldorman*, *þegen*, and *ceorl* all serve to represent society as a pyramid with Æthelred at the top. This concern for social hierarchy is woven into the structure of the poem; the speeches made after the death of Byrhtnoth are carefully assigned according to rank from the nobleman Ælfwine, who speaks at length, down to Dunnere the *ceorl*, who gets only two lines.[50] The use of the term *grið* highlights that the poem is not simply representing social hierarchy in an anachronistically idealized manner; rather the poem also addresses acute concerns that this hierarchy was under threat from both internal and external pressures.

Outside of its appearances in the Chronicle, in texts from the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century, *grið* is strongly associated with legal and homiletic texts written by Wulfstan, Archbishop of York and advisor to Æthelred, or with texts whose language shows the influence of Wulfstan's characteristic prose style and social agenda.[51] In Wulfstan's writings, the word occurs in passages emphasizing the value of social order and hierarchy: God's authority should be maintained by both kings and bishops, with all those under them respecting their rank in a divinely ordained social order. In his *Institutes of Polity*, where he sets down most systematically his vision of an ideal social order, he writes:

> And riht is, þæt ælc cyrice sy on Godes **griðe** ond on ealles cristenes folces; and þæt cyric**grið** stande æghwær binnan wagum and gehalgodes cynincges hand**grið** efen

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[50] For comments on the importance of social hierarchy in *Battle of Maldon*, see, for example, A. N. Doane, 'Legend, History and Artifice in "The Battle of Maldon"', *Viator*, 9 (1979), 39–66 (pp. 54–55); W. G. Busse and R. Holtei, '*The Battle of Maldon*: A Historical, Heroic and Political Poem', *Neophilologus*, 65 (1981), 614–21; Ann Williams, 'The Battle of Maldon and "The Battle of Maldon": History, Poetry and Propaganda', *Medieval History*, 2 (1992), 35–44 (pp. 42–44); John Gillingham, 'Thegns and Knights in Eleventh-Century England: Who Was Then the Gentleman?' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 5 (1995), 129–53 (p. 146); and James Campbell, 'The United Kingdom of England: The Anglo-Saxon Achievement', repr. in his *Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 31–53 (p. 38). Busse and Holtei argue that the poem takes a positive view of social mobility and the rise of the thegn.

[51] See note 53 below for Thomas Bredehoft's suggestion that a Wulfstanian influence can be seen in the Chronicle entry for 1011.

unwemme. Forðam ælc cyric**grið** is Cristes agen **grið**, and ælc cristen man ah mycle þearfe, þæt he on þam **griðe** mycle mæþe wite.[52]

The repetition and compounding of the term *grið* emphasizes Wulfstan's views of the interdependence which belongs at the heart of a social hierarchy which begins with God and extends down to each Christian. *Grið* is not simply a term for a truce; rather it brings with it connotations of peace grounded in a hierarchical social order — a subject of great concern to the poet of *The Battle of Maldon*. Although the association of social hierarchy with *grið* represents Wulfstan's own usage, we may perhaps be warranted in seeing some interaction between the language of *Maldon* and the distinctive rhetoric of Wulfstan. For the reign of Æthelred, apart from two instances in the Chronicle (C, D, and E, *s.a.* 1011 and 1016), the collocation of *grið* and *frið* is limited to *Maldon* and Wulfstan's legal and homiletic prose, where the two words often rhyme.[53] This linguistic convergence between *Maldon* and Wulfstan's works underscores the poem's topicality and engagement with current social issues.

At the end of the tenth century and beginning of the eleventh, the social order represented by the term *grið* was under pressure. The social mobility brought about by the emergence of an increasingly wealthy, landed, thegnly class, able to profit from commerce and the administrative needs of a large kingdom, was accelerated at the end of the tenth century by Viking attacks. The militarization of society required to defend England enabled members of lower social ranks to use their military skill to rise socially.[54] Furthermore, as Wulfstan depicts in his famous *Sermo Lupi*, Viking social patterns were disrupting established English social hierarchies from within:

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[52] *Die 'Institutes of Polity, Civil and Ecclesiastical': Ein Werk Erzbishof Wulfstans von York*, ed. by Karl Jost (Bern, 1959), p. 142. 'And it is right that every church be under the protection of God and of all Christian people; and that church-sanctuary stand everywhere within in its wall and be just as inviolate as the security of a consecrated king. Because every church-sanctuary is Christ's own sanctuary and every Christian has great need that he observe great respect for that sanctuary.' Wulfstan repeats these words, and very similar ones, in his lawcodes and homilies.

[53] See Bredehoft, *Textual Histories,* pp. 106–10, for the suggestions that the poem or rhythmical prose at the end of the Chronicle entry for 1011 may be Wulfstan's work or Wulfstanian. Perhaps the collocation of *grið* and *frið* at the beginning of the entry also suggests his influence.

[54] James Campbell, 'Some Agents and Agencies of the Late Anglo-Saxon State', in his *Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 201–25; Gillingham, 'Thegns and Knights', pp. 136–37; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 461–62; and Fleming, 'New Wealth'.

Ðeah þræla hwilc hlaforde ætleape 7 of cristendome to wicinge wurðe, 7 hit æfter þam
eft gewurðe þæt wæpengewrixl wurðe gemæne þegne 7 þræle, gif þræl þone þegen
fullice afille, licge ægilde ealre his mægðe; and gif se þegen þone þræl þe he ær ahte
fullice afille, gilde þegengilde.[55]

Wulfstan expresses the view that the Vikings were not only the cause of social
instability, they were also its effect: the Vikings were God's punishment for social
disorder.[56]

Maldon's concern with the preservation of a rigid social order fits into this
framework of Vikings as punishment; viewed from this perspective, the social
conservatism of the poem is not simply idealized poetic nostalgia but rather an
alert and informed intervention into political debate about how to deal with the
Vikings. In this respect, it is worth noting that the poet is interested in the social
status of the Vikings, whom he explicitly places at the bottom of any hierarchy.
As Byrhtnoth steps into battle, he is an eorl opposing a mere ceorl: 'eode swa
anræd eorl to þam ceorle' ('thus resolute the nobleman went to the ceorl', line
132). Later the Viking who deals Byrhtnoth his death blow is denoted as a dreng
(line 149), a Norse word for warrior, newly brought into poetry and used here
appropriately for a Scandinavian. However, borrowed into English, the word
comes to mean 'a lower class of freeman': the poet makes the point that a Scandi-
navian warrior amounts to little, even if he threatens to destroy a whole social
order.[57] Like the use of grið, the use of dreng shows us a poet who is able both to
extend the vocabulary of poetry and to draw the full semantic range of a new
word into the meaning of his poem, as he stretches an old poetic form to explore
a new world order, and the threat posed to it by Scandinavian invaders.

Treasure also plays a part in the poem's representation of social status. To
finish discussion of Maldon, I want to look at the interaction of the poem's social
concerns with its conventional attention to treasure in order to develop further
a picture of the active and examined place of a timeless poetics in late Anglo-

[55] The Homilies of Wulfstan, ed. by Dorothy Bethurm (Oxford, 1957), pp. 263–64, lines
98–103. 'Though any slave escapes from his lord and, departing from Christendom, becomes
a Viking, and after that it happens that a hostile encounter takes place between the thegn and
the slave, if the slave slays the thegn, he will lie without compensation for all of his family; and
if the thegn slays the slave, whom he owned before, he will pay the price of a thegn.'

[56] Patrick Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society', in his Legal
Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience (London, 1999), pp.
225–51 (p. 244–45).

[57] For dreng from Old Norse and in Middle English, see Maldon, ed. by Scragg, p. 77.

Saxon England. Despite the decreased importance of jewellery as a marker of aristocratic status in tenth- and eleventh-century England, treasure remains key to the poet's delineation of Byrhtnoth's elite role in society. Byrhtnoth's defiant refusal to allow the Vikings 'swa softe sinc gegangan' ('to obtain treasure so easily', line 59) casts him as a guardian of treasure, and after Byrhtnoth's death, the poet also uses reference to treasure to define his role when loyal Edward avenges his *sincgiefa*. The Byrhtnoth of *Maldon* would have been at home in Hrothgar's hall, though other written sources of the period, including wills, charters, chronicles, monastic histories, and saints lives, make it evident that Byrhtnoth was fully participant in the sophisticated administrative politics of late Anglo-Saxon England.[58]

This timeless poetic representation of Byrhtnoth is far from inert, however. Rather, the poet brings convention to life by putting treasure at the centre of his account of Byrhtnoth's death in battle:

> Eode þa gesyrwed   secg to þam eorle;
> he wolde þæs beornes   beagas gefecgan,
>   reaf and hringas,   and gerenod swurd.
> þa Byrhtnoð bræd   bill of sceðe
> brad and bruneccg,   and on þa byrnan sloh.
> To raþe hine gelette   lidmanna sum,
> þa he þæs eorles   earm amyrde.
> Feoll þa to foldan   fealohilte swurd:
> ne mihte he gehealdan   heardne mece,
> wæpnes wealdan. (*Battle of Maldon* 159–68)[59]

This passage contributes to the way treasure defines Byrhtnoth as an idealized symbol of Æthelred's England. To begin, treasure is not everywhere in the poem, but carefully associated with Byrhtnoth who is the only figure described as bearing or wearing treasure. Thus the poet marks out his superior social status, and the reference to him as a *sincgiefa* underscores that his death threatens the stability of the entire social order. Just as abundant silver coinage attracted the Vikings to England, a desire for easy plunder draws the Viking warrior to the

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[58] Scragg (*Maldon*, pp. 8–20) gives a sense of the range of sources documenting Byrhtnoth's life and the battle of Maldon.

[59] 'The armed warrior then went to the nobleman; he wanted to carry off the rings of the warrior, the armour and the rings, and the ornamented sword. Then Byrhtnoth drew his sword from its scabbard, broad and bright-edged, and struck the mail corslet. Too quickly one of the seamen prevented him, when he wounded the arm of the nobleman. The fallow-hilted sword fell then to the ground: he could not hold the fierce sword, control the weapon.'

wounded, but still fighting, Earl, whose rings, armour, and ornamented sword are specifically detailed. Attention is focused on Byrthnoth's sword, 'brad and bruneccg' (broad and bright-edged), as he fends off and kills his first attacker. Attention remains with Byrhtnoth's sword, whose ornament is again noted, as the poet expresses the Earl's death as an inability to wield his sword which falls to the ground. The term used for the ornament of the fallen sword highlights just how skilfully the poet is using images of treasure in these lines. *Fealohilte* is a unique compound, and this unusual use of *fealo*, meaning both 'yellow' and 'fallow' and associated in Old English verse with decay, brings a figurative level to the description of the sword which binds together treasure, and the social order it represents, with decay at the moment of Byrhtnoth's death.[60] Importantly, the association of *fealo* with yellow calls to mind gold rather than silver and keeps the archaic and imaginary aspect of the poem's treasure in the forefront. The alliteration of *feolohilte* with *feoll* and *foldan*, meanwhile, takes us back to the beginning of the poem and leaves us in no doubt that the poet is using treasure as a shorthand for a well-ordered social hierarchy. *Foldan* and *feallan* alliterated earlier in the lines in which Byrhtnoth boldly proclaimed that he would defend

>   eþel þysne,
> Æþelredes eard,   ealdres mines
> folc and foldan.   Feallan sceolon
> hæþene æt hilde. (*Battle of Maldon* 52–55)[61]

There is a bitter irony, then, when the sword 'feoll þa to foldan' (fell to the ground) instead of the heathen and when *folde* becomes simply the ground rather than Æthelred's land. This irony reinforces that created by the repetition of *anræd* for Byrhtnoth as he bravely defies the Viking messenger and then as he enters into the combat in which he is killed. This heavy irony suggests that although the poet is drawn to the nostalgia offered by poetry, he does not find in it solutions for England's present troubles.[62] Although the poem does not condone tribute, it also acknowledges that ultimately, guarding the nation's treasure in battle rather than paying tribute did not work, and Byrhtnoth, arrayed in treasure as a true nobleman, cannot defend his lord's land from the heathens.

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[60] On *fealo* and decay, see *Maldon*, ed. by Scragg, p. 78.

[61] 'this native land, the homeland of Æthelred, the people and land of my lord. The heathen shall fall in battle.'

[62] See above, note 49, for Niles's view that the poem does not represent Byrhtnoth ironically.

There seems to me less of a celebration of the battle of Maldon as a moral victory for the English, as has often been suggested, than despair that maintaining traditional social structures and nostalgia for an imagined heroic past and values offers, or offered, no protection against the Viking onslaught.[63]

The 'offers' or 'offered' of the final sentence of the last paragraph raises the question of the date of *Maldon* which must be addressed before we can return to the question of the poem's view of nostalgia. In comparison to most Old English verse, the date of *Maldon* can be precisely identified: it was composed at the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh century. However, in the context of interpreting how the poem intervenes in debates about the Vikings and Æthelred's response, this seemingly narrow date range becomes frustratingly imprecise. Readings of the poem depend greatly on whether it is seen as composed in the midst of Viking raids on Æthelred's kingdom or composed after the Danish Conquest of 1016. Here it is worth noting that the affinities between *Maldon* and the Chronicle make the date more rather than less difficult to determine given the Chronicle's post-1016 composition.[64] Does the poet share the chronicler's benefit of hindsight? Does he know that neither resistance nor tribute will succeed? Is his subject the single defeat at Maldon or the final defeat which brought Cnut to the English throne? Does the poem suggest rejecting heroic values as a solution, or is the poem a *Beowulf*-like lament for the passing of a people, with the English, after 1016, taking the place of the lost Geats?[65] These questions bring us back to the timelessness of Old English poetics and to the way the poetry resists dating and to how that resistance is part of its meaning and attraction. Timelessness impedes efforts to decode *Maldon* — we can simply lay out how the poem's meaning may have changed before and after the events of 1016 . Furthermore, like earlier Old English poems, *Maldon* may well have been accretive: if the version we have was composed before the Danish conquest, it may well have attracted changes after 1016.[66] The potential

[63] On Maldon as moral victory, see, for example, Greenfield and Calder, *New Critical History*, pp. 149–54.

[64] See above, p. 243.

[65] For a comparison of the English on the eve of the Danish conquest with the Geats in *Beowulf*, see Robert L. Kellogg, 'The Context for Epic in Later Anglo-Saxon England', in *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period: Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.*, ed. by Helen Damico and John Leyerle (Kalamazoo, MI, 1993), pp. 139–56 (pp. 153–54).

[66] Since we have only an eighteenth-century transcription of the poem, the manuscript offers no help here.

timelessness of *Maldon,* which is characteristic of Old English poetry, may account for its survival as well as its composition and does not impede our ability to see what work the poem may have done after the Danish conquest: if the poem was composed shortly after 991, its timeless poetics ensured that it could take on new meanings, as well as emendations, additions, and alterations, after 1016. Either way, *Maldon* illustrates that old (and potentially dated) poems, like old poetics, were not static in late Anglo-Saxon England: both could be used to negotiate the relationship of past and present.

In thinking about the role of timeless poetics and poems in late Anglo-Saxon England, it is worth returning (having considered the poem's date) to look more closely at the nature of its nostalgia through a brief comparison with Wulfstan and *The Battle of Brunanburh*. The poem shares with Wulfstan an intense desire for an earlier stability of social structures — such as that expressed by Wulfstan at the beginning of *Geþyncðu,* a compilation on status:

> Hwilum wæs, þæt leod 7 lagu for be geþingðum; 7 þa wæron þeodwitan wurðscipes wurðe, ælc be his mæðe, ge eorl ge ceorl, ge þegen ge þeoden.[67]

But where Wulfstan saw recovery of social stability as a way of regaining God's favour and thus defeating the Vikings, attention to language and wordplay shows us the poet of *Maldon* drawn to conservatism but ultimately without any confidence that a return to the past would be, or could have been, effective. Unlike Wulfstan, the poem does not place much faith in a return to earlier social structures — which the poet validates but locates in an imagined past which he represents as passed, unrecoverable, and ineffective. The poet's view of the past has implications too for his view of the role of heroic poetry about contemporary events in late Anglo-Saxon England. Here comparison with *The Battle of Brunanburh* is illustrative. Where *Brunanburh* used heroic poetry to legitimize expanding West Saxon hegemony by presenting it as an extension of the traditional, *Maldon*, in contrast, critiques that use of poetry suggesting that longing for the imagined England of poetry was not the future.

The poet's tight and expert control of conventional language in *Maldon* illustrates that Old English poetry was a living tradition for him and that he was aware that timeless poetry was an ideologically charged space, which brought

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[67] *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. by Felix Liebermann, 3 vols (Halle, 1903–16), I (1903), 456. 'It once was that people and law went by dignities, and, then, councillors of the people were worthy of respect, each according to his status, whether noble or *ceorl*, thegn or lord.' This passage is discussed by Patrick Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 393–94, 461.

with it a political and social conservatism. His ability to combine old conventions with linguistic innovation, exemplified in his use of Old Norse vocabulary and the connections of his verse with the language and concerns of the Chronicle and Wulfstan, brings convention to life. The result is a poem in which the inherent conservatism of Old English verse is an active force, whose vision of the relationship of past and present is, in turn, actively scrutinized. The fragmentary state of the poem prevents us from seeing what the poet may have considered the best response to the Vikings to have been, and the difficulty of interpreting *Beowulf* warns us that it is unwise to read Old English verse with such straight-forward expectations. But it remains evident that the poet does not offer nostalgia as a refuge or an embracing of the past as the way forward.

Conclusion

Bringing together close reading with an ideologically oriented approach to Old English verse shows us that late Anglo-Saxon poetry remained a linguistically sophisticated and flexible medium whose conventions were not used unthinkingly, simply because they were a part of the form. Tradition and convention were part and parcel of Old English verse — not only did they govern what was said in the verse, and how it was said, but these qualities were integral to why late Anglo-Saxons continued to compose verse in its classical form. In composing and preserving classical Old English poetry, be it about contemporary events or legendary heroes, the Anglo-Saxons were making a choice, they were relating to the past in a deliberate fashion: one which both learned from the world portrayed by the timeless poetics of their verse tradition and critiqued that world. Traditional poetics thus remained alive because it played a vital role in shaping the Anglo-Saxon relationship with the past. It is precisely because Old English verse is archaic, rooted in the past, that it is alive and vigorous into the eleventh century.[68]

The 'Meaning of the Narrative Moment': Poets and History in the Late Viking Age

Judith Jesch

Once upon a time, there was a dashing young Icelandic poet with black hair, called Óttarr. There was also a beautiful young princess, Ástríðr, the daughter of the Swedish king. The poet composed a love-poem about the princess. The story goes that, years later, Óttarr got into trouble for his love-poem. The princess, as princesses do, married a prince, not a poet. Her prince was Óláfr Haraldsson, King of Norway, and this is what happened when the King and the poet met:

> En er Óttarr kom til Nóregs, þá lét Óláfr konungr inn helgi taka hann ok setja í myrkvastofu ok ætlaði at láta drepa hann.
>
> Sighvatr skáld var mikill vinr Óttars. Hann fór um nótt til myrkvastofunnar, ok er hann kom þar þá spyrr hann hversu honum líkaði. Óttarr svarar ok segir at verit hafi honum kátara. Sighvatr bað hann þá kveða kvæðit þat er hann hafði ort um Ástríði. Óttarr kvað kvæðit sem Sighvatr beiddi.
>
> Ok er hann hafði lokit kvæðinu þá mælti Sighvatr, 'Mjǫk er kvæðit ort ok eigi er undarlegt þótt konunginum mislíki kvæðit. Nú skulum vit snúa þeim vísum sem mest eru á kveðin orð í kvæðinu. Síðan skaltu yrkja kvæði annat um konunginn, en at vísu mun hann heimta at þér kvæðit áðr þú sér drepinn. Nú er þú hefir þat kvæðit kveðit, þá skaltu eigi láta falla kveðandina heldr skaltu þegar hefja kvæðit þat er þú hefir um konunginn ort ok kveða meðan þú mátt.'
>
> Óttarr gerði svá sem Sighvatr mælti. Hann orti á þrim nóttum, þeim er hann var í myrkvastofunni, drápu um Óláf konung. Ok er Óttarr hafði þrjár nætr verit í myrkvastofunni, þá lét Óláfr konungr leiða hann á sinn fund.
>
> Ok er Óttarr kom fyrir konunginn þá kvaddi hann Óláf konung. En konungrinn tók eigi kveðju hans heldr mælti hann til Óttars, 'Þat er nú ráð,' segir konungr, 'at þú kveðir, Óttarr, kvæði þat er þú hefir ort um dróttninguna áðr þú sér drepinn, því at dróttningin skal heyra hróðr þann er þú hefir ort um hana.'
>
> Ástríðr dróttning sat í hásætinu hjá konunginum þá er þeir Óttarr tǫluðusk við. Óttarr settisk niðr á gólfit fyrir fœtr konunginum ok kvað kvæðit. Konungrinn roðnaði

við er hann kvað. Ok er lokit var kvæðit, þá lét Óttarr eigi niðr falla kveðandina heldr
hóf hann upp drápuna, þá er hann hafði ort um konunginn. En hirðmenn konungs
kǫlluðu ok mæltu at flímberinn skyldi þegja.

Sighvatr mælti þá, 'Þat er líkast,' sagði hann, 'at konungrinn eigi vald á at drepa
Óttar þegar hann vill, þó hann kveði kvæði þetta fyrst. Ok hlýðum vér vel kvæðinu því
at oss er gott at heyra lof konungs várs.'

Hirðin þagnaði við þessi orð Sighvats en Óttarr kvað drápuna til enda. En er því
var lokit, þá lofaði Sighvatr mjǫk kvæðit ok kallaði vel ort.

Óláfr konungr mælti þá, 'Þat mun ráð, Óttarr, at þú þiggir hǫfuð þitt í þessu sinni
fyrir drápuna.'

Óttarr svarar, 'Þessi gjǫf þykkir mér allgóð, herra, þótt hǫfuðit sé eigi fagrt.'[1]

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[1] *Den store saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. by Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason (Oslo,
1941), pp. 688–89 (but with normalized orthography), and 'The Tale of Ottar the Black', in
The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson and others, 5 vols (Reykjavík, 1997),
I, 340–41: 'So when Ottar went to Norway, King Olaf had him seized and put in a dungeon,
intending to have him killed.

'The poet Sighvat was a great friend of Ottar's. He went by night to the dungeon, and
once there asked Ottar how he felt. Ottar replied that he had been more cheerful before.
Sighvat asked him to recite the poem that he had composed about Astrid, and Ottar did as
Sighvat asked.

'When he had finished, Sighvat said, "The poem is complex and I'm not surprised that the
king didn't like it. We must change those stanzas which are most explicit in the poem, and
then you must compose another poem about the king. He will certainly want to hear the poem
about the queen before you are killed, and when you have finished reciting it you must not
stop but should go straight on to recite the poem you have composed about the king and
continue reciting for as long as you are able."

'Ottar did as Sighvat advised. During the three nights he was in the dungeon, he composed
a *drapa* about King Olaf. And when those three nights had passed, King Olaf had Ottar
brought before him.

'Ottar came before the king and greeted him, but King Olaf did not return his greeting.

'Instead, he said, "It is time, Ottar, for you to recite the poem you composed about the
queen before you are killed, because the queen ought to hear how you have praised her."

'Queen Astrid was sitting on the dais beside the king as he spoke to Ottar. Ottar sat down
on the floor at the king's feet and recited the poem. The king grew red as he recited. And when
the poem was finished, Ottar did not stop his recital but began the *drapa* which he had
composed about the king, while the king's men called out for the mud-slinger to be quiet.

'Then Sighvat intervened. "There is no doubt," he said, "that the king has the power to
kill Ottar whenever he wishes, even if he does recite this poem first. So let us listen carefully
to the poem, because it is good for us to hear the praise of our king."

'The king's men grew silent at these words of Sighvat's, and Ottar recited his poem to the
end. When it was finished, Sighvat praised the poem highly and said it was well made.

Then King Olaf said, "It seems advisable, Ottar, to let you have your head this time, as a
reward for the *drapa*."

'Ottar answered, "I think that's an excellent gift, my lord, even if the head is not beauti-
ful."'

This anecdote is recorded in several versions of the saga of King (later Saint) Óláfr Haraldsson and purports to explain the circumstances in which Óttarr the Black composed the poem (*drápa*) known as *Hǫfuðlausn* 'Head-Ransom' in praise of that King.[2] In the version of the anecdote given above, *Hǫfuðlausn* is not cited at all: the story focuses on the reason for composing the poem rather than on the poem itself. Other versions cite only the first line of *Hǫfuðlausn*, while one cites the whole of the first stanza. Yet, unlike the poem about the Queen, which is not recorded in any version of the anecdote, or indeed in any other text, Óttarr's poem about the King is known, for some twenty stanzas survive in other contexts (described further below). The name *Hǫfuðlausn* appears in the versions of the head-ransom anecdote, but not in the citations of individual stanzas in other contexts. This name has been used by modern scholars for all surviving stanzas composed by Óttarr for Óláfr Haraldsson, since it is not known that he composed any other poem for this King, but the name may very well be a product of the same explanatory tendency as the anecdote itself. We have, then, on the one hand, a fairly conventional praise poem, and on the other an explanation of how that poem came to be composed, yet these two are quite separate in textual history. It has been usual to regard the poem as probably historical (in the sense that it was composed by that poet for that King) and the anecdote as probably fictional (in the sense that the poem was not composed in the circumstances described). Thus the anecdote reveals the Icelandic habit of telling stories to explain the origins of poems, thereby giving a new context to a poem whose original context was no longer remembered, or no longer relevant. But the anecdote would have little point if the poem itself were not known, at least by reputation.

In the anecdote, then, a fictional or fictionalized context has been provided for a poem originally composed for quite a different context. That original context was in the late Viking Age when kings and chieftains would employ poets who composed formal poems in praise of them, recording and celebrating their various warlike and other accomplishments. This genre (often known from its form as *dróttkvætt* 'composed in court metre' or, more generally, 'skaldic', from the word *skald* 'poet') flourished particularly in the late tenth and eleventh centu-

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[2] For the other versions, see *Den store saga*, ed. by Johnsen and Jón Helgason, pp. 702–03; *Otte brudstykker af den ældste saga om Olav den hellige*, ed. by Gustav Storm (Christiania, 1893), p. 7; and *Olafs saga hins helga: Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olaf den Heiligen*, ed. and trans. by Anne Heinrichs and others (Heidelberg, 1982), p. 130. A *drápa* is technically a long praise poem with a refrain.

ries. By then, the poets were mainly Icelanders (at least according to the Icelandic tradition which preserves the texts), and the kings were mainly Norwegian, though Swedish, Danish, and English kings could also be celebrated. The poems were composed in the poet's head and recited orally before an audience of the king and his retainers, or of his heirs if it was a posthumous poem (known as an *erfidrápa*). The poems were composed in a strict, syllable-counting, stanzaic metre (i.e. *dróttkvætt*) and used complex diction. Both of these aided their memorization, for in a pre-literate culture a rigid form was the best way of ensuring that significant events and deeds were remembered. We know little about how the poems were transmitted, but transmitted they were, and in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, they provided invaluable source material for Icelandic and other historians writing about Scandinavia's Viking Age past.

For those historians, Óláfr Haraldsson was the most important figure of Viking Age Scandinavia, and this is the key to the textual preservation of Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn*. Óláfr died in battle in 1030 and was rapidly canonized, becoming Scandinavia's first royal saint. Many versions of his life were written, both hagiographic and secular, in both Latin and Old Norse. Most of Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn* survives because it was used as a primary source by the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson, who cites seventeen of the twenty surviving stanzas of the poem in his saga of St Óláfr.[3] Snorri is also responsible for preserving two more in his *Edda*, a handbook to mythology and poetry.[4] Although it is not possible to go into the details of source criticism here, it should not be forgotten that the poem is not recorded as a unity, but as individual stanzas embedded for different reasons in different kinds of prose texts, and has been reconstructed by modern scholars from these texts. This is the case for most Viking Age praise poems, rendering most generalized statements about their contents eternally provisional, since we will never be sure that the poems have been reconstructed correctly, in their entirety, and in the form in which they were first recited to the king in question. But, given this caveat, much of the corpus is remarkably well preserved and relatively easy to reconstruct, and Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn* falls into

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[3] This exists both in an independent version, edited by Johnsen and Jón Helgason as *Den store saga* (the stanzas are on pp. 35–36, 39, 45–47, 50, 57, 63, 154–55, 254), and as the central part of his history of the kings of Norway: Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslenzk fornrit, 26–28 (Reykjavík, 1941–51; repr., 1979), II, 5–6, 16–17, 19–20, 22, 25, 35–37, 172–73.

[4] Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London, 1998), pp. 62, 81, 95, 105. For the remaining stanza, see *Den store saga*, ed. by Johnsen and Jón Helgason, p. 702.

this category, allowing at least a tentative analysis of the poem.[5] Although I have called it a praise poem, there is relatively little direct praise in it. The poet does start with a conventional introduction (st. 1) requesting the attention of his audience (*hlýð* 'listen!') and outlining his eulogistic task (*at dýrka gífrs glaðnistanda*: 'to glorify the feeder of the horse of the trollwoman [wolf → warrior]').[6] Following this introduction, the bulk of the poem consists of a narrative, an account of some of the events of the King's life, containing relatively little evaluation, let alone praise, of any sort. Such evaluation as there is comes at the end of the poem, in two stanzas (18–19) mirroring the opening of the poem.[7] The poet brings the audience back to the here and now of the performance, making reference to the current extent of the King's power and comparing it favourably to that of other (unspecified) kings:

> Nú ræðr þú fyr þeiri,
> þik remmir guð miklu,
> fold, es forðum heldu
> fimm bragningar, gagni.
> Breið eru austr til Eiða
> ættlǫnd und þér. Gǫndlar
> engr sat elda þrøngvir
> áðr at slíku láði (st. 18).[8]

In between the introduction and the conclusion, however, the praise is implicit in the narrative of events rather than explicitly articulated. These events involve

[5] On the problems of reconstructing praise poems generally, see Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (Øvre Ervik, 1982), with comments on the reconstruction of *Hǫfuðlausn* on pp. 123–24.

[6] The standard edition of the reconstructed poem is in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, 4 vols (Copenhagen, 1912–15; repr., 1973), AI, 290–96, BI, 268–72. Individual stanzas are, however, cited from the text editions listed in notes 3 and 4. Although there is no published English translation of the poem as such, the nineteen stanzas found in Snorri's works can be traced in translations of those works, e.g. Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway*, trans. by Lee M. Hollander (Austin, 1964), and Snorri Sturluson, *Edda*, trans. by Anthony Faulkes (London, 1987). All translations of skaldic stanzas in this essay are my own.

[7] The half-stanza traditionally numbered 20 probably belongs earlier in the poem if, indeed, it belongs to this poem at all; see Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, p. 124.

[8] 'Now you rule over that land which was previously held by five princes; God strengthens you with great victory. The ancestral lands under you are broad, east to Eiðar. No wielder of the fires of Gǫndull [valkyrie → swords → warrior] has previously reigned over such a realm.'

a series of successful journeys to a series of places where Óláfr was successful in war, followed by his return to Norway, where he became king.

A simple definition of 'narrative' as 'the narration of a succession of [. . .] events' indicates that it can be fruitful to employ a narratological perspective on *Hǫfuðlausn*.[9] The techniques of narratology, as first demonstrated by Genette, provide a clear and more precise understanding of narratives of all kinds.[10] The term 'narrative' actually refers to three different things: (1) narrative as 'text', that is, the verbal artifact itself; (2) narrative as 'story', that is, the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are narrated in the text, but that can be considered in abstraction from the text; and (3) narrative as 'narration', or the act of narrating, that is, the process by which the story becomes text. While more general studies of narrative often focus on the interpretation or significance of the 'text', the verbal artifact itself, narratology both brings out and is concerned with the relationships between all three of these aspects of narrative. Moreover, where the concern is with narrative and history, as in this volume, a narratological focus on 'story' and 'narration' can help to clarify issues both of the genesis of the 'text' and its historiographical status.

I have, on previous occasions, attempted to use the analytical tools of narratology to address the questions of 'history' and 'fiction' in some Old Icelandic prose texts that have a generous measure of both.[11] Such detailed analysis helps also to clarify attitudes to 'history', the events of the past, and 'historiography', accounts of the events of the past, in the culture in which these texts were produced. It can show whether, and to what extent, the texts present themselves as historiography, that is, an account of the past based on a variety of sources which are sometimes incomplete and sometimes conflict with each other. Moreover, the analysis can often reveal the ways in which such disparate sources are employed in the texts, when they are pressed into the service of historiography rather than being subsumed into the monolithic and omniscient voice of a fictional narrator.

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[9] The definition is adapted from Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London, 1983), p. 2. She is primarily concerned with fictional narratives, but recognizes that 'some of the procedures used in the analysis of fiction may be applied to texts conventionally defined as "non-fiction"' (p. 3).

[10] Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Oxford, 1980).

[11] 'Narrating *Orkneyinga saga*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 64 (1992), 336–55; 'History in the "Political Sagas"', *Medium Ævum*, 62 (1993), 210–20; 'Presenting Traditions in *Orkneyinga saga*', *Leeds Studies in English*, 26 (1996), 69–86.

In this essay, I attempt such an analysis of a poetic text. Although the reconstructed poem *Hǫfuðlausn* is not traditionally thought of as a 'narrative', it fulfils the requirements of a 'narration', that is, it is both a 'communication process in which the narrative as message is transmitted by addresser to addressee' and 'the medium used to transmit the message' is 'verbal', while it is also true that this message concerns a 'succession of events'.[12] I suggest therefore that a narratological analysis of the poem will help to reveal the ways in which it interacts with 'history', that is, the past events which form its story.

Viking Age praise poems often relate a series of events. It can be shown that Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn* is partially dependent on a poem about Óláfr's youthful exploits, known as the *Víkingarvísur* 'Viking verses' and composed by his uncle and mentor Sighvatr.[13] *Víkingarvísur* is one of the poems it is easiest to reconstruct, because it comprises a numbered catalogue of battles, one per stanza (as can be seen in st. 5, cited below), usually naming the location and characterizing the opponents. To call such poems 'praise poems', though not wrong, is misleading, for one of their functions, as important as that of praise, was to record events for a preliterate culture. The numbered battle-catalogue of the *Víkingarvísur* is a classic example of this urge to preserve information. Such poems later proved to be useful evidence for medieval historians precisely because they were intended as historiography from the start: they were composed with an eye on posterity as well as on the flattering moment of performance and reward. Insofar as historiography is basically narrative, therefore, all of the poems in this genre are potentially narrative, or have narrative elements or components. In spite of this, it has not until recently been fashionable to treat them as narratives.[14] Admittedly, skaldic praise poems are highly unusual types of narrative. Narrativity does not immediately spring to mind as their main characteristic: modern readers find it hard to look beyond the baroque kenning-encrusted style of this poetry to see more basic structures in it. Yet closer inspection reveals that

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[12] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 2.

[13] Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 214–15. For an edition and translation of Sighvatr's poem, see Christine Fell, '*Víkingarvísur*', in *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. by Ursula Dronke and others (Odense, 1981), pp. 106–22. The role that Sighvatr plays in the head-ransom anecdote shows that this poetical indebtedness was recognized.

[14] Honourable exceptions are John Lindow, 'Narrative and the Nature of Skaldic Poetry', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 92 (1981), 94–121 (though he is not really concerned with praise poems), and R. G. Poole, *Viking Poems on War and Peace: A Study in Skaldic Narrative* (Toronto, 1991).

narrativity is an important part of the way these poems work, and Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn*, in particular, is best understood as a narrative, even if of rather a special kind.

One immediately obvious characteristic that makes it special is that it is a second-person narrative, in which the poet tells the King his own life story to date, using a large number of second-person verbs in the past tense:

> Ǫttuð órum skreyttum
> austr í salt með flaustum.
> Bǫruð lind af landi,
> landvǫrðr, á skip randir.
> Neyttuð segls ok settuð
> sundvarpaði stundum.
> Sleit mjǫk róin mikla
> mǫrg ór und þér bǫru (st. 4).[15]

This device is relatively unusual: poets might address the king directly at certain points in the poem (unless it is a posthumous poem), but their accounts of the events in which he was involved are generally told more indirectly in the third person. This is certainly what Sighvatr does in his *Víkingarvísur*. The fifth stanza of this poem contains one of the poet's rare second-person addresses to Óláfr in the battle-enumeration, but soon reverts to the usual third-person narrative, in describing his attack on *Kinnlimasíða*, an unknown place possibly in the Netherlands:

> Víg vanntu, hlenna hneigir,
> hjǫlmum grimmt et fimmta,
> þolðu hlýr fyr hári
> hríð Kinnlimasíðu,
> þás við rausn at ræsis
> reið herr ofan skeiðum,
> en í gǫgn at gunni
> gekk hilmis lið rekkum.[16]

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[15] 'You set out east to sea with ships, adorned with oars. Guardian of the land, you carried spears from the land, shields onto ships. Now and again you used the sail and set it against the strait-disturber [wind]. Many a heavily-rowed oar tore the great swell beneath you.'

[16] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, II, 13. 'Suppressor of thieves, you won the fifth battle, destructive of helmets — the (ships') bows suffered a storm off high *Kinnlimasíða* — when the (enemy) army rode in splendour down to the leader's [Óláfr's] warships and the chieftain's [Óláfr's] troop went to meet the (enemy) warriors in battle.' On the place-name, see Judith Jesch, *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age: The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 82–83.

Both Sighvatr and Óttarr (and many other poets, who were often brought in to do their versified propaganda after the fact) also make clear that they were not actually present at the events they are recounting, but that their information is based on hearsay, as Óttarr does in *Hǫfuðlausn*:

> Varð nýtligust norðan,
> nú est ríkr af hvǫt slíkri,
> frák til þess, es fóruð,
> fǫr þín, konungr, gǫrva (st. 3b).[17]

It could be cheeky, or even dangerous, to stand up in front of a king and tell him what he has accomplished based on hearsay, but in reality it was flattering, for what the poet is saying is that the king is so renowned for his deeds that news of them has reached the poet, who now wishes to put them into words that will make them even more memorable. In this stanza the 'I have heard' formula (*frák*) is ambiguously placed between the general reference to the King's power and the specific reference to his first youthful Viking voyage, making it applicable to both in a way that it is not possible to reproduce in an English translation.

The relatively frequent emphasis in the skaldic corpus on the secondhand nature of the poet's information arises from his awareness of his role as oral historian, with a scrupulous distinction between what he has seen and what he has only heard of. For there are also examples of poets who stress that they were present at the events they are describing, and it is also clear that the medieval historians who used their evidence particularly valued this type of stanza.[18] This use of the 'I heard' formula should therefore be distinguished from the Old English instances, which 'characteristically allude to the world of oral discourse and oral tradition', invoking 'legendary tradition and a body of "sayings" orally transmitted'.[19] But skaldic verse does not 'allude' to 'oral discourse and oral tradition'; it is still very much a part of them. The skaldic poet is quite unlike the Anglo-Saxon oral poet who 'cannot assume the kind of stability in discourse and in the matter of discourse which the literate poet can'.[20] The difference lies in the strict forms of *dróttkvætt*, which are designed precisely to ensure as much fixity in the text as possible in an oral culture, and which also ensured that the texts

[17] 'Your voyage from the north, king, was most successful; you are now powerful from such prowess; I have heard all about when you journeyed.'

[18] For some examples, see my 'History in the "Political Sagas"', esp. pp. 212–14.

[19] Ward Parks, 'The Traditional Narrator and the "I Heard" Formula in Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 16 (1987), 45–66 (pp. 47, 51).

[20] Parks, 'Traditional Narrator', p. 47.

survived reasonably intact until they were written down, thus giving later readers an insight into that particular 'oral discourse and oral tradition'.

Thus, in skaldic praise poetry, both the use of second-person narration and the not-so-formulaic references to hearsay and tradition are indicators of the original performance context of the oral poems that survived their transition to the dismembered written texts which were the sources of the medieval Icelandic historians. As indicated above, this original performance context involved the direct address of the king by the poet. If a second-person narrative is unusual in skaldic praise poetry, it is at least not surprising there, given these circumstances of the composition and performance of this genre. Yet it is uncommon in narrative more generally, and not all narratologists even recognize the possibility. Where they do, they assume that the second person is a fictional character in the narrative (a 'narratee', the recipient of narration), addressed by an equally fictional narrator:

> [A] narratee is a visible fictional character whom we witness being addressed by an even more visible second-order narrator, and behind their fake dialogue is some storyteller [. . .] whom we take to be the agent of all their words.[21]

Much writing on narrative is of course concerned with modern fiction, and theorists struggle to distinguish the 'real' author and 'real' reader from their counterparts in the text, the 'narrator' and the 'narratee', as does Parks in his study of Old English poetry: 'The poetic narrator is the teller within the tale, the narrative voice within the context of the work itself, as distinguished from the actual, real-world author.'[22] Yet, in the non-fictional *Hǫfuðlausn* we have a narrative that arose when a real poet addressed a real king in the second person to tell him the story of his own deeds: author and audience are equivalent to narrator and narratee.

In assessing the poem as 'real' in this sense, it is significant that the possibility of second-person narration within a narrative is not taken up by the king's saga-authors who cite the poems as evidence. When they quote from such poems, they choose not to describe, in their narratives, a context of performance which would make the citation of a verse with second-person narration natural; instead they merely cite the stanzas as evidence for their narrative, just as they do with other stanzas that are narrated in the third person. For instance, stanza 4 of Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn* (quoted above) is introduced by Snorri with the words

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[21] Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London, 1988), p. 80; see also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, p. 89.

[22] Parks, 'Traditional Narrator', p. 46.

Óttarr svarti segir þat berum orðum, at hann fór þá austr ór Danmǫrk 'Óttarr says clearly that he then went east from Denmark', with the third-person pronoun (*hann* 'he') of this prose introduction contrasting awkwardly with the second-person verb form (*Óttuð*) that is the first word in the immediately following stanza.[23] In the original context of performance, however, the second-person address made perfect sense. This clear disjunction between the discourse mode of the quoted stanza (second-person) and that of its surrounding prose (third-person) confirms the fact that the saga-author is quoting from a pre-existing poem and illustrates the various narrative levels at work.[24] First, there is the 'story', the actual events that took place in the early eleventh century. Then, there is the first 'narration', when the poet speaks directly to the king soon after those events and recounts them to him, sometimes in the second person. This poem is transmitted and is used as a source for the second 'narration' by the thirteenth-century historian, who recounts the events, this time in the third person and in prose, but also embeds in his account the actual stanzas which are his source for that account. The two narrations together form the 'text', the verbal artifact that has survived to the present day and is our only available object of study, and our only access to the 'story', the actual historical events.

While its consistent use of the second-person form is unusual (even in the skaldic corpus), other aspects of Óttarr's poem place it more comfortably in the narrative mode, in particular its concern with a 'succession of events'. The sequence is chronological and firmly located in the past. Although the battles are not numbered the way they are in *Víkingarvísur*, the poet makes liberal use throughout the poem of time adverbials such as *síðan* ('afterwards': st. 5), *enn* ('again': st. 7), *áðan* ('previously': st. 8), *forðum* ('previously': st. 18), and *áðr* ('before': sts 9, 14, 18, 19) to indicate the relative order of events, as in this description of a victory over the English:

> Þengill, frák, at þunga
> þinn herr skipum ferri,
> rauð Hringmaraheiði,
> hlóð valkǫstu, blóði.
> Laut fyr yðr, áðr létti,

[23] Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*, II, 6.

[24] Judith Jesch, 'Knútr in Poetry and History', in *International Medieval and Scandinavian Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. by Michael Dallapiazza and others (Trieste, 2000), pp. 243–56 (p. 253). See also Jayne Carroll, 'Poetic Discourse in Viking Age England: Texts and Contexts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2001), chapter 3, for an especially detailed analysis of the ways in which saga-writers cite verses.

> landfolk í gný randa,
> Engla ferð, at jǫrðu
> ótt, en mǫrg á flótta (st. 9).[25]

The very first word of the narrative part of the poem (st. 3, quoted above), *ungr* 'young', refers to the King at the time of the events being narrated and suggests that the poet will cover the sweep of the King's career to date, from his most youthful battles to the present time of the performance, as indicated by the use of *nú* 'now' in the same stanza. Again, there is a clear distinction between the time of the 'story' and the time of the 'narration'.

The events in which the King has excelled are the usual ones: he has been successful in war (e.g. st. 9, quoted above) and (a prerequisite for this if he goes abroad) he has been a successful sea-captain (e.g. st. 4, quoted above). A different kind of eulogy might just praise the king for his success in naval warfare in very general terms, as in Edmund Waller's 'To the King, on his Navy', the king in question being Charles I:

> Where'er thy navy spreads her canvas wings,
> Homage to thee, and peace to all she brings;
> The French and Spaniard, when thy flags appear,
> Forget their hatred, and consent to fear.[26]

But *Hǫfuðlausn*, though it has a eulogistic purpose, has narrative form and is therefore quite different, for

> [n]arrative shies away from abstraction and thrives on concreteness. It concentrates on the particular and not the general. Rather than presenting sequences which are true to any set of circumstances, it tends to present sequences which depend on a specific set.[27]

In the conventional world of Old Norse court poetry, all kings are generous and successful at war and at sailing. But to actualize the praise of any individual king, it is necessary to give specific examples, and a good way of doing this is in narrative form, as a sequence of examples of his success in war and sailing and, in some other poems, of his generosity. The praise is therefore in the telling of the 'story', in the 'narration' itself.

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[25] 'Prince, I have heard that your army heaped a heavy pile of corpses far from (your) ships; *Hringmaraheiðr* grew red with blood. The locals, a troop of English, quickly fell to the earth because of you in the crash of shields [battle], before it was over, while many (fell) in flight.'

[26] Edmund Waller, 'To the King, on his Navy', in *The Poems* (London, 1893), pp. 15–16, lines 1–4.

[27] Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin, 1982), p. 149.

Óttarr's poem ends with a deictic reference to the here and now of the moment of performance, the actual 'narration' of the 'story', as indicated by the adverbial *nú* ('now') and the present tenses in stanza 18, quoted above (also in st. 19). In these stanzas, the narrative culminates in an ideological statement, with references to the past basis of the King's present power, conforming to the observation that

> narrative presents more than temporal sequences of states and actions (involving some kind of conflict): it presents temporal sequences of states and actions that make sense in terms of a human project and/or a humanized universe.[28]

Thus, the narrative of Óláfr's youthful deeds culminates in his project of becoming a great king, which was proleptically referred to in stanza 3 (quoted above). Although the 'ideological' stanzas at the end (sts 18–19) are not in themselves narrative, they enable the poem as a whole to have what Prince calls 'high narrativity', because

> whenever the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and different from it rather than equivalent to it, narrativity will tend to increase: narrative can show that like events may combine into like events but, more interestingly, and significantly, it can show that (un)like events may combine into larger and different events.[29]

Óttarr's poem, despite appearances, is more 'narrative' than, for instance, medieval chronicles which, it has been claimed, are not proper narratives because they do not have closure:

> [T]he chronicle, like the annals but unlike the history, does not so much 'conclude' as simply terminate; typically it lacks closure, that summing up of the 'meaning' of the chain of events with which it deals that we normally expect from the well-made story.[30]

Stanzas 18 and 19 of Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn* provide precisely this closure that sums up 'the "meaning" of the chain of events'.

Having established that Óttarr's poem conforms to the structures of narrative, we might well ask what the purpose is of using this mode. Why stand up before a king and tell him the story of his life, however 'well-made', the one story that he of all people already knows? Would it not be simpler and more flattering to compose a flowery eulogy, a celebratory ode, as Waller did for Charles I? It is important to note that the King is not the whole of the audience for Óttarr's

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[28] Prince, *Narratology*, p. 148.

[29] Prince, *Narratology*, p. 152.

[30] Hayden White, 'The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality', in *On Narrative*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, 1981), pp. 1–23 (p. 16).

poem which, though addressed to the King, was performed before an audience, probably of his followers. There were undoubtedly many in that audience who had not yet heard this particular story. Those who did know the story may have got pleasure from hearing it again, especially if they were involved in some of the events. Thus, the story allows a collective reliving of past experiences. But the poet also has his eye on posterity, and a public recital ensures that the events are fixed in the collective memory. The use of both personal and place-names in this poem helps to fix the most important facts, providing the particularity that is a characteristic of narrative. Narrative is thus essential to the historiographical aims of the genre.

Like the Anglo-Saxon charters discussed by Sarah Foot elsewhere in this volume, the skaldic narrative had the function of telling the past in such a way that it was fixed for the future. Like Regino of Prüm, discussed by Stuart Airlie in this volume, the skaldic poet appears as an authorial presence in his text, drawing attention to his sources. Moreover, his authorial personality is also of importance outside the text, guaranteeing its authenticity and authority. Skaldic poetry is unusual among early medieval poetic genres in not being anonymous: the name of the poet is very firmly attached to the individual stanzas as they are recycled in the historical texts. For historians like Snorri, the poet is the authority for the information they take from his poems. But it is also clear to us that the poet is in some sense the creator of that information. Handsomely rewarded for his poem, he presents a flattering and definitive version of the life and works of the king or chieftain being praised, securely enmeshed in the strict and complex forms of *dróttkvætt* which would ensure its enduring testimony. This is 'writing' history *avant la lettre*.

The historiographical function is common to most Viking Age praise poems. But what is unusual about Óttarr's poem is the extensive use of second-person forms discussed above. These make the poem more personal, more intimate, as if there were only the two of them, the poet and the king, in the room. This would have been entirely appropriate in the situation described in the anecdote: if you want to persuade the king not to chop your head off, look him straight in the eye, dare to address him directly, ignoring everyone else in the room, and tell him what he already knows. He cannot fail to respond. And he did not. Perhaps after all there is a grain of truth in the anecdote: the derivative nature of Óttarr's *Hǫfuðlausn*, as well as its extensive use of the intimate second person, are both consonant with the composition of a conventional narrative type of praise poem in *dróttkvætt* in an unconventional situation. While sticking to the convention of recording the King's deeds for posterity, Óttarr had another more pressing aim in the moment of composition: to save his own head. However, as noted

above, the author of the anecdote does not quote the poem and therefore chooses not to develop this aspect of the drama. The anecdote may rather have arisen precisely because the unusual character of the poem was recognized, and it was therefore associated with the common tale-type of 'poet displeases king and redeems himself by composing a praise-poem', familiar from *Egils saga* and elsewhere. It is characteristic of this type of anecdote that the life-saving poem is not always quoted, thus not all manuscripts of *Egils saga* cite the whole of his head-ransom poem.[31] However, even if all head-ransom stories are formulaic and fictional, the authenticity of each poem associated with such stories needs to be determined individually, using other criteria.[32] Whether Óttarr's poem really arose in such a situation we will never know: the historical poet may have had entirely different reasons for wanting to address the King so intimately.

Although Viking Age praise poetry is not at first glance an obviously narrative genre, it responds well to analysis as narrative, because it had a function, and 'the study of narrativity can illuminate not only the functioning of a given [. . .] narrative but also the meaning of the narrative moment'.[33] In the case of the fictional Óttarr, the character in the anecdote, the 'meaning' was all important, for in the narrative moment, the moment in which he recited his poem in praise of the King, he saved his head. For the historical poet, who composed the stanzas now known as *Hǫfuðlausn*, it is much more likely that the meaning of this narrative moment lay in the recognition of his role as recorder of events for posterity. This is the more usual 'meaning' of such Viking Age narrative moments: not only to flatter a powerful king, but also to 'write' history in a preliterate age.

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[31] *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík, 1933), p. 185. See also Russell Poole, 'Variants and Variability in the Text of Egill's *Hǫfuðlausn*', in *The Politics of Editing Medieval Texts*, ed. by Roberta Frank (New York, 1993), pp. 65–105.

[32] For a skeptical view of the 'head-ransom' anecdotes, see Baldur Hafstað, *Die Egils saga und ihr Verhältnis zu anderen Werken des nordischen Mittelalters* (Reykjavík, 1995), esp. pp. 35–47. For a recent attempt to rehabilitate Egill's *Hǫfuðlausn* as an authentic product of tenth-century York (if not as a head-ransom poem), see John Hines, 'Egill's *Hǫfuðlausn* in Time and Place', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research*, 24 (1994–97), 83–104.

[33] Prince, *Narratology*, p. 161.